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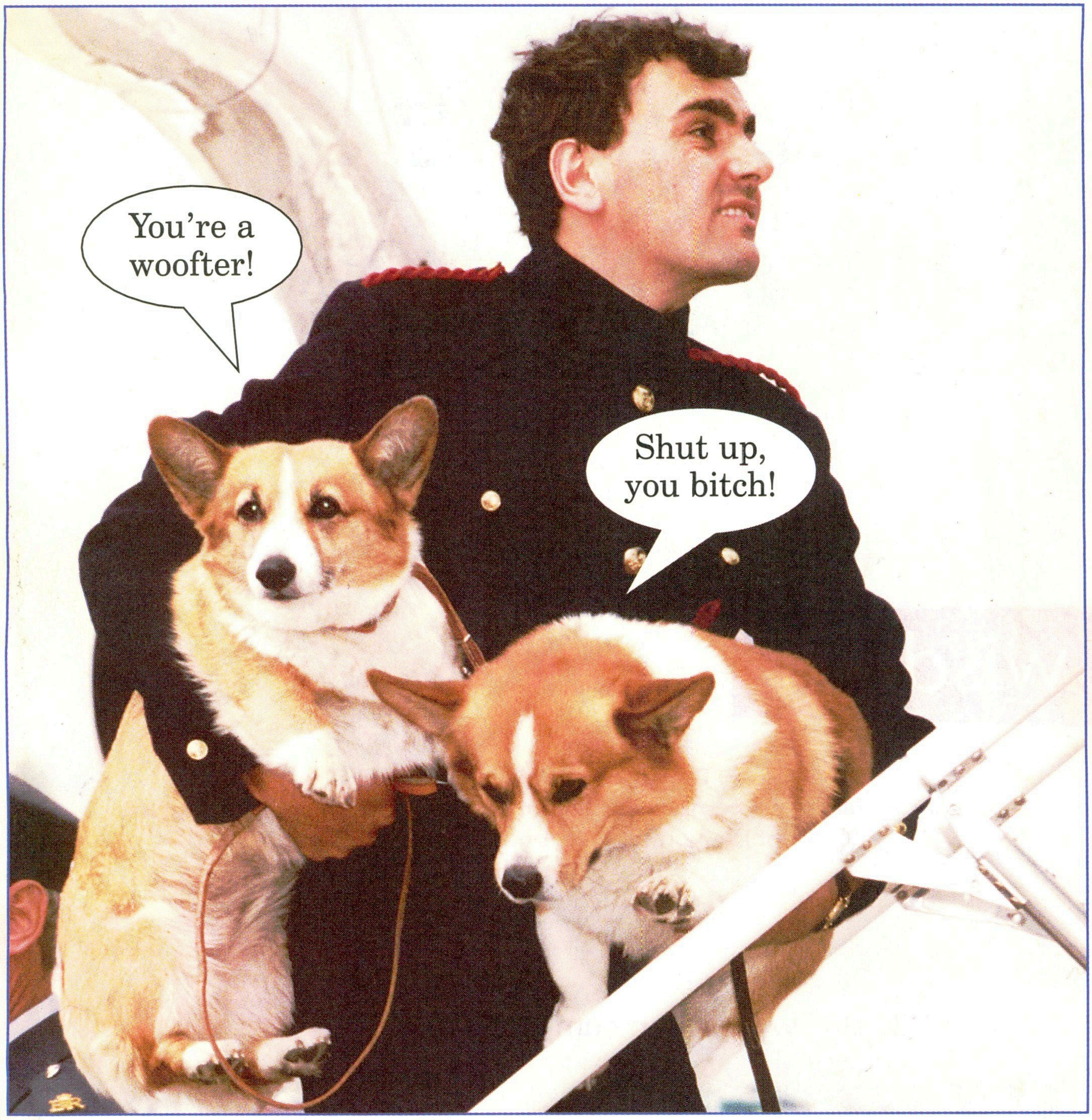

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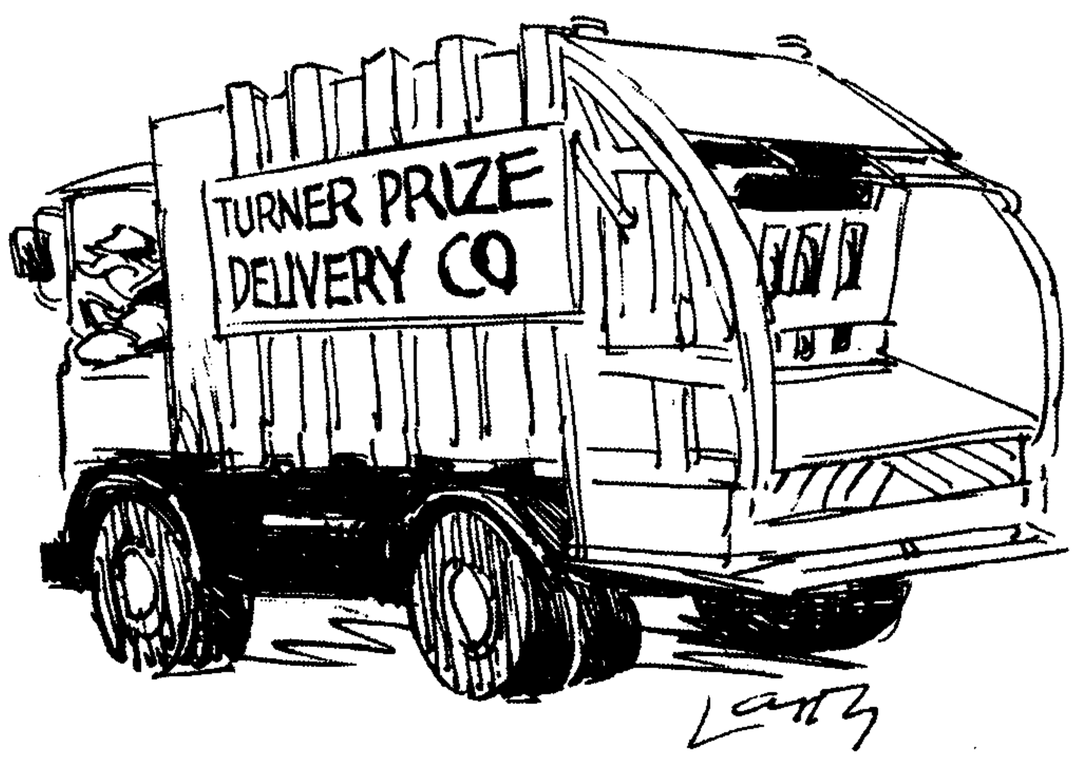

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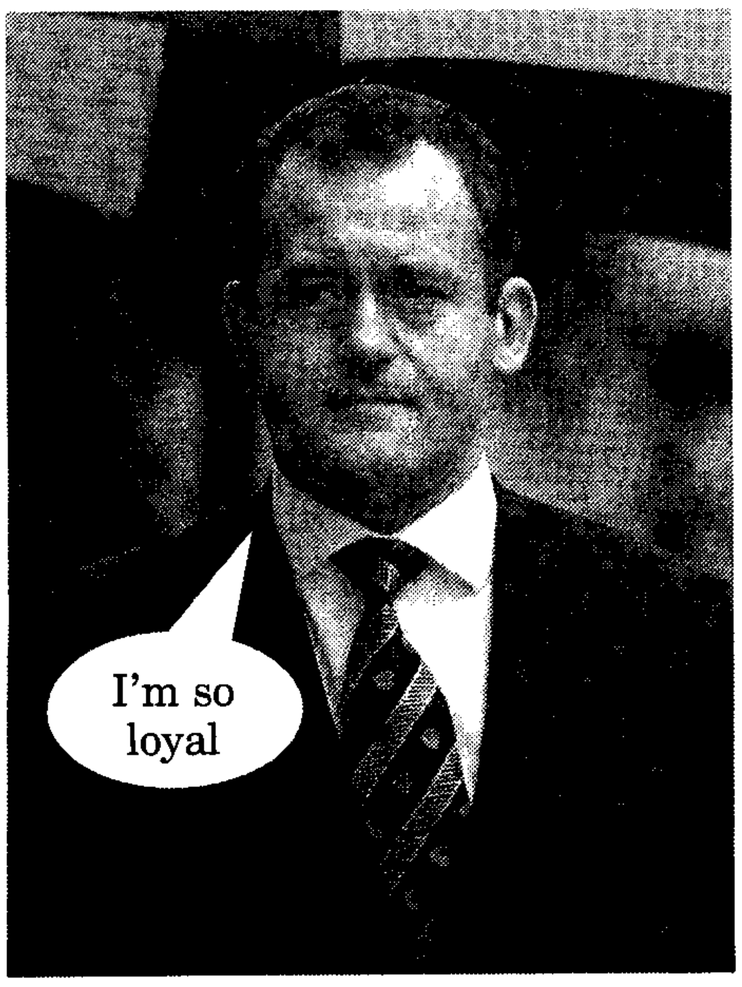

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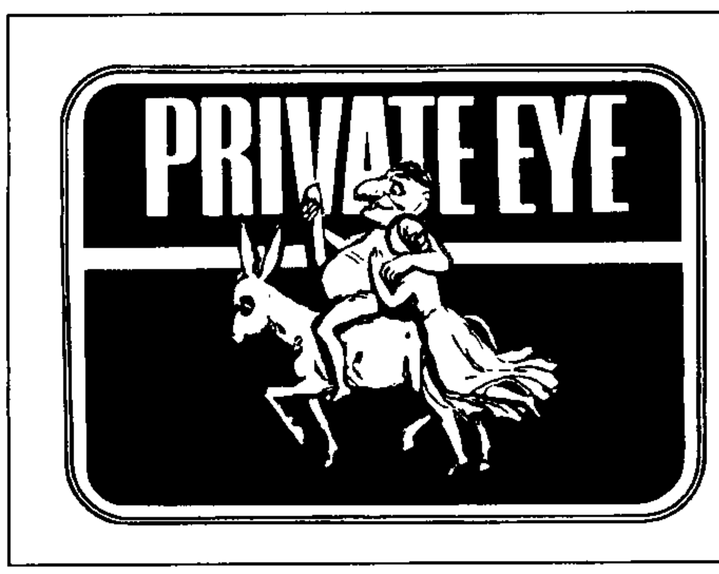


IN THE TEAROOM

BY AN extraordinary display of quiet resolve IDS last week guaranteed that he will lead the Conservative party into the next election – the local council election next May, that is.

Inspired by the example of his father's dog Prang, who once stared down a pack of savage hounds, the Tory leader has bought his rivals a few more months to practise their assassination techniques. Unless, of course, he spends the interval picking them off one by one, as he's being urged to do by those who depend on his survival for their own.

According to this group, Michael Portillo is the softest target. He's been so free with his protestations of innocence and seemingly earnest assurances that he's forsaken all leadership ambitions, that he's left himself vulnerable to being taken at his word. Fortunately for the Duncan Smith camp, gorgeous, pouting Tory MEP Theresa Villiers (well... as gorgeous and pouting as Tory MEPs get) has begun to tire of Brussels and looks longingly in the direction of Portillo's safe Kensington & Chelsea seat.

Ms Villiers's translation to UK politics would conveniently free up an MEP place for talented Asian candidate Sayeed Kamal, allowing the party yet another tick in the inclusivity box. An appeal to Portillo to apply for the Chiltern Hundreds now and go off and pursue alternative careers in the media, the arts and the Lords, for the sake of party unity, you understand... would serve either to flush him out as a clear enemy or get rid of him once and for all.

Ken Clarke is a more slippery fish. The leader's best option is to renew his invitation to Ken to serve. Clarke is quite happy making money at the moment and yawns at the thought of joining the shadow cabinet. But anyone who just passes when he's told it's time for all good men to come to the aid of the party hardly looks like leadership material, does he? As for David Davis – that's even tougher. Perhaps IDS should take another tip from Prang and aim to stake out more territory, cocking his leg on as many local constituency associations as he can manage.

'Urquhart'

THE prime minister is a little churlish in giving credit to the man who first started arguing for "top-up fees" at universities. He is none other than Sir Keith Joseph, education secretary in Margaret Thatcher's government in 1982.

Shortly before the Labour conference of that year, Joseph told his shadow education secretary Neil Kinnock that "it would be more healthy for the universities if they did not depend so much on governments and taxpayers". The remark stung Kinnock into a furious response at the conference.

In one of his most famous speeches he contrasted people in the hall who had never had the benefit of a university of education "because they did not have a healthy system as Joseph calls it" with people like himself who had. He concluded: "I went into higher education and hundreds in this hall went there and will go there. We got it because the community provided, because the taxpayer and the government were the source of a healthy education system."

The applause was deafening and had some effect on the Tories. Joseph and his successors dropped the idea of top-up fees. Kinnock became leader of the Labour party. John Major records that the idea was put to him several times – and he always rejected it. Now it is taken up enthusiastically by Blair.

PS: Kinnock's most stalwart aide at the time of his historic speech was Charles Clarke, now secretary of state for... education.

CONFUSION reigns in the criminal justice system where the prison population is now a record 73,000, with 500 overnighting in police cells too.

The explosion follows a succession of eye-catching let's-get-tough-on-crime initiatives from home secretary David Blunkett, who has now been forced to appeal to judges and magistrates *not* to send so many people to prison.

Ironically, proposals to reduce the number of jury trials will lead to *more* people going to jail (judges and magistrates sitting alone are more likely to convict). And has anyone told the prime minister of Blunkett's change of heart? His plea for leniency on behalf of less serious offenders came on the same day Tony Blair was promising a veritable war on beggars, buskers, peddlars, litter louts and gum-chewers.

"I THINK what they have done is frankly disgusting," Mirror editor Piers Moron told the Press Gazette when asked about rival papers' reaction to his deal with boot-filling butler Paul "serve and sell" Burrell.

"The idea that one day you offer £500,000 or £1m to a guy and the moment he does the same thing you are offering for in an another paper, you dump all over him, doesn't look good for newspapers."

He was at it again in Monday's *Mirror*, decrying the "revolting stench of hypocrisy blowing through Fleet Street". Could this saintly figure be in any way related to the Piers Morgan who reacted to the *Mail*'s £700,000 deal with Ulrika Jonsson last month by serialising "Ulrika Exposed – By Her Mother", or launched a scathing attack on cancer-sufferer Nick Leeson after the same paper bought up his memories for £100,000?

And can he have anything to do with the *Mirror* editor who championed nanny Louise Woodward during her murder trial in the US, only to follow up her parents' £40,000 deal with the *Mail* with the spectacularly dumpy front page headlines "'Louise Is A Lying Monster'" and "'She Did It!'"

OLD JOKES REVISITED NO. 94

Legal News

AMID the reams of garbage written about the collapsed prosecution of Paul Burrell, the scandalous way justice was bent in order to sort out how to deal with Brenda's last-minute intervention has been overlooked.

First, QC William Boyce, for the crown, raised the spurious issue of public interest immunity (PII). National security never was and never would have been an issue; and it appears that no minister had either signed or been approached to sign a PII certificate to keep certain issues under wraps.

Nevertheless he and Mrs Justice Rafferty used the PII issue as a basis to withdraw into secret session, excluding, it would appear, not only Burrell's defence barrister Alex Carlile QC but also a shorthand writer. This went against long established practice laid down by the lord chief justice that when the defence is excluded from secret deliberations, a full note is kept of the proceedings.

After the trial collapsed, the judge said she did not have to rule on the prosecution's PII application. But by then of course the secret work had been done and – conveniently – there is no record of it. In fact the sudden revelation that Burrell had told Brenda he was keeping some items need not have been fatal to his prosecution for theft.

The Burrell case is not the first disaster in the career of chief prosecutor Boyce. He masterminded the criminal case against Colin Stagg for the murder of Rachel Nickell on Wimbledon Common. The case was based almost entirely on evidence from a woman police officer who enticed him into making remarks about the murder which fell well short of a confession. Rather like the Burrell case, it was flung out contemptuously by the judge before the defence case was even heard.

THE government meanwhile achieved an own-goal in its determination to make an example of MI5 renegade and whistleblower David Shayler.

By denying him a public interest defence for his allegations of illegal activities and incompetence in the security services, the jury had no option but to convict him.

Shayler is now going to turn to the European court of human rights. This is likely to force a change in the discredited official secrets act.

NEWS

"NEW" Labour favourite Professor Sir George Bain has been roped in to report on the likely cost to the public of any pay award to fire-fighters, but he is facing rather similar problems in his own back yard.

At Queens University Belfast, where Sir George is vice-chancellor, there is profound discontent about the government's draft education budget for Northern Ireland. The budget diverts the province's share of the £1.25bn allocated to research away from the area's two universities.

The decision has shocked and infuriated the authorities, including the vice-chancellor. He has described it as "the most significant threat to the university in my time in the post". He has encouraged his staff to write to the press to protest and even sanctioned a demonstration on 6 November in Belfast organised by the Association of University Teachers.

Whether his outrage at government stinginess will be carried over into his report on fire-fighters' pay remains to be seen...

THE government's commitment to NSLF (nothing succeeds like failure) is much in evidence at the Royal Mint, which prints money and for the first time in history is actually losing it.

The Mint's newly-promoted manager, who appeared recently at the Commons public accounts committee (PAC) to explain, among other things, how the Mint managed to lose £18.5m, including £25,680 in used notes stolen from an unlocked safe, is Gerald Sheehan.

Eye readers will recall him as the manager of ASW, a steel firm that went bust this year leaving its workers whistling for their pensions. Happily Mr Sheehan managed to take his £60,000 pension money out a few months before the deluge.

The government's inevitable answer to the chaos at the Mint is to "commercialise" it by appointing to its board the redoubtable Lucy Woods, former European vice-president of Worldcom. Since her appointment, Worldcom has proved the advantages of commercialisation by losing £2.5bn.

JUST FANCY THAT!

WAYNE Hemingway, the British designer, claims that the public are being "ripped off" by major fashion houses that sell their designer label clothes at mark-ups of up to 1,000 percent or more... "Designer fashion is the emperor's new clothes. Spending £400 on a jacket that costs a fraction of that to make shows that you have got more money than sense."
— Page 4, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 November.

"Are you thinking about buying a suit? Then think tweedy... Moschino Cheap & Chic, black/brown tweed, appliqued with green velvet flowers, 8-14, £1,070... Dolce & Gabbana, brown/cream, black check, wrapover belted jacket, £599." — Page 19, *Daily Telegraph*, 4 November.

Street of Shame

THE *Sun* – sister paper to the "Name and Shame" *News of the World* and home earlier this year to its own "perv law campaign" – has always unashamedly displayed teenagers' bosoms on page 3. But the paper excelled itself with its front page of 4 November, which featured Harry Potter star Emma Watson in a diaphanous dress under the headline "Hermione Looks Magic". Watson is 12.

Sub-editors at the paper's News International stablemate the *Times* did at least question the decision of deputy editor Ben Preston to lead their own front page with a similar picture – not least because it was accompanied by three columns speculating about whom the child fancied: "Could the way Hermione hugs Harry be the first sign of love? Or does her heart really belong to Ron Weasley?"

SHOULD James Strachan have been appointed chairman of the audit commission, even though he's the lover of government minister Tessa Blackstone? Yes, of course, argued a vigorous *Guardian* editorial on 29 October.

Should Trevor Phillips be made head of the Commission for Racial Equality, even though he's a Tony crony? Yes indeed, said the same editorial.

"It is important to get rid of this guilt-by-association approach," it argued. Merit was the only criterion, and people with "outstanding qualifications" shouldn't be vetoed merely because they happen to have friends and relations in the government which appoints them.

A few days later, the *Grauniad* put its principles into practice. After an exhaustive search for the person with the most outstanding qualifications to write a review of the new Harry Potter film, the paper selected 16-year-old Lizzie Rusbridger. Merit, as ever, was the only criterion, and the fact that her father edits the *Grauniad* clearly had nothing to do with it.

THESE are anxious times for the *Mail on Sunday*'s "brilliant" new columnist Adam Helliker, who is being groomed to succeed poor old Nigel Humpty Dumpster when they finally put him down.

At Helliker's old paper, the *Sunday Telegraph*, rumours abound of the discovery of a "smoking gun" document written by either Helliker or his deputy Jane Slade and left in the computer system. It takes the form of a lengthy memo giving the pros and cons of leaving the *Sunday Telegraph* to join the *Mail on Sunday* and pulls no punches in its comments on the senior executives at both papers.

"It amounts to one columnist's comprehensive suicide-note to not one, but two newspaper managements," says one who has seen it.

But Tim Walker, Helliker's mild-mannered successor at the *Sunday Telegraph*'s Mandrake column, is not inclined to tell tales. "There is honour among diarists, as there is among thieves," he tells a colleague. "And besides, I don't know enough about the computers here to find it, even if I wanted to."

SINCE last month, workers on short-term contracts have enjoyed the same legal rights as full-time staff, unless different treatment can be "objectively justified". The new regulations also stop employers from keeping "temporary workers" on a succession of contracts for more than four years without giving them staff status.

"The government has allowed a lengthy consultation period before introducing the regulations, to give employers time to come to terms with them," the *Times* reported on 1 October, the day the new rules came into force. "However, a very large number remain unprepared for the full scope of the regulations."

Indeed so – and they include the *Times*'s own sister paper, the *Sunday Times*, which has long tried to avoid hiring staff by keeping hacks on endlessly renewed fixed-term contracts. Some have been strung along like this for five years or more. But in mid-October, executives suddenly realised they were breaking the law. Alas, amid the frenzied rush to comply with the rules, they forgot to consult one another.

Thus newsroom hack John Elliott, who has been at the paper for three years, was summoned by news editor Charles Hymas and told that he hadn't yet proved himself worthy of a staff post but might yet earn one if he tried harder. Returning to his desk after the conversation, the crestfallen hack was surprised to find a letter from another boxwallah announcing his appointment as a staff reporter.

Meanwhile veteran investigative hackette Rosie Waterhouse was promised a staff job by managing editor Richard Caseby, only to be informed soon afterwards that she'd have to remain a "temp" after all.

"LAWRENCE Dallaglio is wearing a Dri-FIT Tech Top, a Dri-FIT compressible pant and an Air Storm Crested Butte, all of which are part of Nike's new 'Storm' range." An advertisement? A fashion spread? No, it's a picture-caption illustrating an interview with the rugby star in the *Observer Sport Monthly*.

This advertorial-style assignment was cooked up by *OSM* editor Matt Tench and the PR firm Freud Communications. The deal was that if the mag printed a huge still from Dallaglio's new Nike commercial (and puffed the products), Euan Ferguson could sit in while the ad was being shot and have a chat with the great man.

Ferguson may be one of the *Observer*'s most fearless hacks, but Tench feels himself obliged to do whatever PR folks such as Freud require to ensure a continuing supply of sports stars for interview in the mag. Imagine his horror on receiving Ferguson's account of Dallaglio in the studio which detailed just how many people it required to work on a photo shoot. Still, Ferguson concluded, this "must be a more fun way to work for Nike than some we could mention – such as being a Chinese peasant woman locked up in barracks 24 hours a day and being paid two cents..."

By the time it was printed, the end of the sentence had been abruptly truncated thus: "...which must be a more fun way to work for Nike than some we're not allowed to mention."

Not allowed, that is, by the brave, independent *Observer*.

CRYSTAL BALLS

BIBULOUS political hack Paul Routledge is immensely pleased with his prescience. "It is not often that one gets three cherries in a row," he brags in the *New Statesman*. "Three weeks ago, this column predicted: Charles Clarke for education secretary, John Reid for party chairman, and Estelle Morris for the backbenches."

Wisely, he omits to mention what he wrote in the *Daily Mirror* shortly after his *NS* prediction: "There is absolutely no need for the minister [Morris] to resign... The Tories can bay for her blood until the next full moon, but she will stay in post."

MEANWHILE Routledge's old drinking companion Charlie Whelan is also trying his hand at soothsaying.

On 30 October he began his *Evening Standard* sports column with the confident announcement that "Adam Crozier's job at the FA is safe." Crozier's departure was duly announced the following day.

A few weeks earlier, Whelan had raved: "I can't recall seeing a better English team than the present Arsenal. Arsene Wenger is not far off the mark when he says they can remain undefeated this season." Arsenal lost their next three games in succession.

THE *Daily Mail* ran a double-page spread on the Washington sniper by "brilliant thriller writer" Philip Kerr in its 21 October issue. Displaying his awesome expertise, Kerr informed *Mail* readers that "if the Washington sniper is taken alive, it is more than likely that he will be not some Al Qaeda terrorist, or even a cackling nutcase, but a quiet, white-skinned male, aged 40-55, who is a stalwart member of the National Rifle Association... Or perhaps the answer lies somewhere in the identity of the first victim, 55-year-old James Martin. Like Martin, several other victims have been fairly heavyset men in their 40s and 50s. Equally, four of the men had beards; and if I were an FBI profiler I'd be working on the possibility that our man is also heavyset, with a beard."

Three days later the police arrested John Lee Malvo, 17, and prime suspect John Allen Muhammad, 41 – both of whom were not at all heavyset, not bearded, not stalwart members of the NRA and, er not white.

HACKWATCH

SCRAPING THE BOTTOM OF THE BURRELL

MUCH of the tabloid frenzy about shenanigans in royal palaces is, of course, attributable to nothing more than sour grapes.

On 2 November, immediately after the abrupt end of Paul Burrell's trial, the *Sun* and *Daily Mail* paid lavish tribute to his loyalty and integrity. A mere four days later the *Sun* was denouncing "blabbermouth Burrell" (apparently forgetting that it had itself offered him a million quid to blab) while the *Mail* vilified him as an "outcast" who had committed the ultimate "betrayal" (apparently forgetting that it had bid £600,000 in the hope of inciting and abetting that supposedly shameful betrayal).

But another subtext, less apparent to readers, is the allegiance of certain hacks to particular factions in the mafia-style vendettas conducted by the Windsors and their flunkeys.

Piers Moron boasts that Burrell signed up with the *Daily Mirror*, even though it paid only half as much as the *Mail* was offering, because he liked and trusted *Mirror* hack Steve Dennis. True enough, but not the whole truth. For Burrell is also an old and close friend of *Daily Mail* hack Richard Kay: indeed he is godfather to Kay's daughter Isabel. Why not accept the *Mail*'s far more generous largesse and tell all to his dear friend Richard, who had been lined up to act as a character witness at his trial?

In the words of Burrell's agent, Dave Warwick, "Piers Morgan was the only editor who came and said he could tell his story as he wanted to tell it." The butler guessed that if he signed with the *Mirror* he'd have the paper's wholehearted editorial support, and he was right: even columnists such as Carole "Oh!" Malone and Tony "Blabbermouth" Parsons have been prancing up and down waving their cheer-leaders' pom-poms. ("In the years to come," Parsons writes, with typical lack of hyperbole, "the scoop of the century will be seen as a story that created history as well as revealing it.")

The support even extends to suppressing other stories that might embarrass the butler: on Monday this week, while complaining about "gay slurs" and "made-up smears" in rival papers, the *Mirror* declined to tell its readers what those slurs actually were – such as the lurid letters and naked photos sent by Burrell to his Australian lover Greg Pead.

Had he gone to the *Mail*, by contrast, Burrell knew that although Kay would treat him sympathetically he might still be savaged elsewhere in the paper – especially if any of his "revelations" seemed likely to embarrass the Prince of Wales. After years as a pro-Diana rag, the *Mail* has lately become pro-Charles, largely thanks to the influence of the prince's spin-doctor Mark Bolland. As we noted in *Eye* 1064, the curious love affair was consummated earlier this year when Bolland hired as his PA one Jo Whitbred, who had for the previous 10 years been secretary to *Mail* editor Paul Dacre.

This allegiance may explain why Simon Heffer's lengthy piece on the Burrell trial last week was published in the *Spectator* and not in Heffer's own paper, the *Mail*. Hefferlump is a friend of Lord Fellowes, formerly the Queen's private secretary, and invariably takes Her Majesty's side in these family feuds. He also loathes Bolland. Much of his *Spectator* article was a defence of the "clever and articulate" royal lawyer Fiona Shackleton, whom Bolland is hoping to blame for the debacle of the Burrell trial, and an attack on the prince and his spin-doctor.

This is the exact opposite of Dacre's line. A few months ago, after writing another *Spectator* piece criticising Bolland, Heffer was rebuked by the *Mail* for "a clumsy attempt to unseat [Charles's] most trusted aide". Last week, while Heffer was striving to protect Fiona Shackleton, Lord Fellowes and the Queen from the flak, the *Mail* listed Fellowes and Shackleton among "the guilty men and women who must shoulder responsibility for the fiasco which has humiliated the monarchy". Dacre's chum Mark Bolland, who has allegedly threatened to "take Shackleton's legs off", must have been delighted.

No doubt he was equally thrilled to learn that *Times* diarist Andrew Pierce had been assigned to cover the latest royal scandals. Last Saturday Pierce wrote a front-page news story which blamed Fiona Shackleton for mishandling the 1996 inquiry into allegations of male rape by one of the prince's staff, and suggested that her position had been "compromised" by her "lamentable" failure to put a stop to the allegations. Another Pierce story on page 3 began thus: "The Prince of Wales has demonstrated that he is a model paternalistic employer by buying one of his most favoured servants a £450,000 house..." The servant in question was Michael Fawcett: at a time when other newspapers were questioning the prince's dependence on Fawcett (pronounced "force it"), the story was wholly uncritical, presenting Fawcett as a "trusted friend and confidant" and the prince as a man capable of "generous gestures". Mark Bolland could hardly have written the piece more flatteringly himself.

And no wonder: for Pierce is himself a "trusted friend and confidant" of the ubiquitous Bolland.

officers noted with alarm that 223 officers and ratings had left the Navy as a result of their homosexuality in the previous three years.

One officer suggested publicising the affairs as a warning to others. "Fleets should be provided with a detailed blow-by-blow account of the Bermuda and Eagle affairs, without mincing the language we use," he said.

Daily Telegraph

"Kiss me and tell, Hardy"

EDUCATION minister Margaret Hodge has made it clear where the government's real priorities lie.

She recently announced the appointment of two new board members at the Adult Learning Inspectorate, an Ofsted-equivalent for technical colleges and vocational courses.

Peter McKee is a retiring director from the missile manufacturer Raytheon; and Balvinder Chana is projects manager at private rail firm First Great Western. Who better to look after further education than former arms dealers and people who can't make the trains run on time?

A LENGTHY *Observer* piece on the continuing repercussions of Estelle Morris's resignation notes that she was effectively forced out by the head of Tony Blair's policy unit, Andrew Adonis, himself a former *Observer* hack.

After a resumé of Adonis's career, it adds: "During his time at Oxford he flirted with the Social Democrats, something for which some in the Labour Party have never forgiven him." Innocent readers might deduce from this that since leaving Oxford more than a decade ago he had adhered firmly to Labour. Not so, however.

Adonis, a *protégé* of Woy Jenkins, was a fully paid-up and active member of the Liberal Democrats until 1996 and had indeed been selected as the Lib Dem parliamentary candidate for Westbury, Wiltshire. He caused the local party great puzzlement (and embarrassment) by suddenly declaring his allegiance to "new" Labour only a year or so before the general election. All was explained after the Labour landslide when Blair rewarded the defector with a job at No 10.

Senior Lib Dems have claimed that following John Major's victory in the 1992 election, Adonis also toyed with the idea of joining the Tories. Is it any wonder he is almost universally mistrusted?

SIMON HEFFER IS AWAY

Great news for people aged 50 and over

Daily Mail

Number crunching

£600m ■ Cost of new air traffic control centre (which doesn't work)

6 years ■ Number of years its completion was behind schedule

£60m ■ Subsidy awarded by government to bail it out

£60,000 ■ Bonus awarded to its chief operating officer

KIM "Bullshit" Howells – a former ardent Communist, sometime Scargillite and now Blairite minister – is at least consistent in his views of art.

His lambasting of the Turner Prize entries is reminiscent of his essay in a Penguin Special published in 1968, the year he led the sit-in at Hornsey art college. "I say shit on their art world, I want nothing of it. I don't wish to participate in their inane pseudo-intellectual conversations about 'their thing'. Because 99 times out of 100 their thing is a phoney product of a phoney conditioned mind."

Twenty years later, interviewed by the oral historian Ronald Fraser, Kim remained unrepentant. "I was very keen on storming buildings, really saw myself as a Red Guard when I went in and told the principal he had to leave his office because the student body had decided we needed it," he recalled happily. "But in fact the debate about creativity was in many ways even more fundamental to me than the directly political debate. For some time I'd been asking myself what I was doing art for. To put it on display in a bloody gallery, owned by some upper-class toff who'd sell it to one of his friends? That wasn't what it should be about."

What, then, should it be about? While other left-wing students proposed changes to the academic system, Howells decided that all art was "just bourgeois individualism" and stormed out of the college in a huff, never to return.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

LORD Powell, former adviser to Margaret Thatcher and now head of the British-Chinese Business Council, appeared on the *Today* programme last week to answer criticisms of the secrecy surrounding government changes in Beijing.

"How leadership is determined in China," he explained, "is not all that different from how members are elected to White's or any other exclusive London club."

But is White's equipped with nuclear weapons?

NEWS arrives of disaster-prone former paymaster-general Geoffrey Robinson of Transtec, Maxwell, Mandelson and parliamentary privileges fame. His latest venture – a move into waste management – has not been without incident either.

Torgam Developments Ltd, which recently invited Robinson to join his daughter Veronique on the board, has just been fined £30,000 for illegally storing clinical waste, including placentas and other human tissue, at an industrial unit in Maltby, near Rotherham.

Torgam was supposedly storing and repairing vehicles and equipment at the site. Earlier this year it asked the Environment Agency if it could also use the site as a temporary hold for clinical waste as it had some problems finding a nearby incinerator. The agency refused but Torgam went ahead anyway. Fining the company for two breaches of the environmental protection act, the judge said: "It is difficult to resist the conclusion, at least in part, that the decision to breach the law was to preserve profits."

TORY new boy Greg Barker was loudly critical of the new rules designed to make MPs work normal hours. "It is complete nonsense to say the proposals are family friendly," he fumed in the Commons. "They are about slacking off to go to the theatre or do whatever else Members might want to do, rather than being in this place holding the government to account as our constituents expect of us."

Many of Mr Barker's Bexhill constituents had expected him to be at an important meeting in the constituency at 6.30pm on 21 October to discuss the fallout from the disastrous Panoramic jazz festival in July which has saddled them with a huge bill (*Eye* 1064). Barker had talked up the festival, persuading the local Tory council to underwrite it and put up £5,000 of his own money for a feasibility study. At first he said he would be "delighted" to answer any questions about his role in the debacle at a meeting of the council's scrutiny committee. But then it turned out he couldn't make it, after all: he had important "Westminster duties" to attend to.

And what were these? At the relevant time the House was debating a Tory amendment to the tobacco advertising and promotion bill, but Barker did not take part in the vote on that at 5.54pm. He wasn't able to because he was still on his way back from Plumpton racecourse where his horse "Party Games" had been running in the 4.05.

Barker told the *Eye* he couldn't attend the Bexhill meeting because "I had undertaken to the whips to be back by 7pm". But the vote was an hour earlier, wasn't it? "I had asked to be slipped for the amendment."

So, er, what was the point of being there at all? "I had a private meeting at Westminster at 7pm." But what was the point of being whipped if you were going to miss the vote? "I'm not going to discuss my whipping arrangements with you."

His horse came fifth, by the way.

THE *Eye* wishes to apologise for giving readers the impression that the Immigration and Nationality Department (IND) might be better qualified than the pisspoor National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to carry out the government's proposed benefits assessments for asylum seekers.

It now emerges that both are as incompetent and inefficent as the other. Insiders at IND suggest newcomers are put into posts without training and left to "pick up the job" as they go along. Some have been trained for the wrong jobs while others have been left idle after waiting months for their job applications to be processed by our good friends at Crapita.

THE freedom of information (FoI) act, which does its best to ensure that the government doesn't have to divulge anything informative or for free, differs in several areas from the data protection act it introduced in 1998.

The lord chancellor's department last month published a consultation document on how these mismatches could best be addressed. And one area under scrutiny is the amount people have to pay to find out what information the government holds on them.

Under the FoI act the lord chancellor can set the "maximum access fee, and the manner in which any fee is to be calculated"; but the data protection act calls for a flat rate of £10. How could the two best be brought into line? The lord chancellor proposes increasing both to "a maximum fee of £55".

Mr Blair accepted her resignation with regret and said he hoped she would soon return to the Government.

It leaves him with a major headcahe as he struggles to push through education reforms which remain his top political priority.

He will appoint a successor today. The hot favourite is Charles Clarke, the abrasive Tory Party chairman

Daily Mail

Court Circular

PAUL BURRELL's police statement that he had had a private meeting with the Queen, followed by Brenda's statement, five years later, that he had told her then of his intention to safeguard some of Diana's possessions, has aroused much suspicion.

Although Buckingham Palace had refused to see any papers on the Burrell case in an effort to preserve Brenda's judicial neutrality, St James's Palace had eagerly devoured them all.

As Charles's staff were panicking over just what Burrell might reveal in the witness box, and with knowledge of the "rape tape" becoming an open secret, a lifeline was thrown to them. Burrell told his defence team, apparently for the first time, what he and Brenda had discussed at that private meeting in 1997. Burrell's lawyers, knowing the importance of the claim, but unable directly to contact the judicially neutral Buckingham Palace, ensured that word was fed back to Charles's office by a trusted third party. After that the whole process of collapsing the trial was swift.

In the version of Brenda's great feat of memory prepared for public consumption, she had her flash of recollection in the car with Charles and Philip on the way to the Bali memorial service at St Paul's. She didn't. The conversation at which the Queen decided to back Burrell's claims had taken place immediately before the car journey from Buckingham Palace, at a meeting attended by senior courtiers and lawyers. It was Brenda's active decision to no longer remain neutral but to back-up the butler's memory that led him to shout out in court, "The Queen has come through for me."

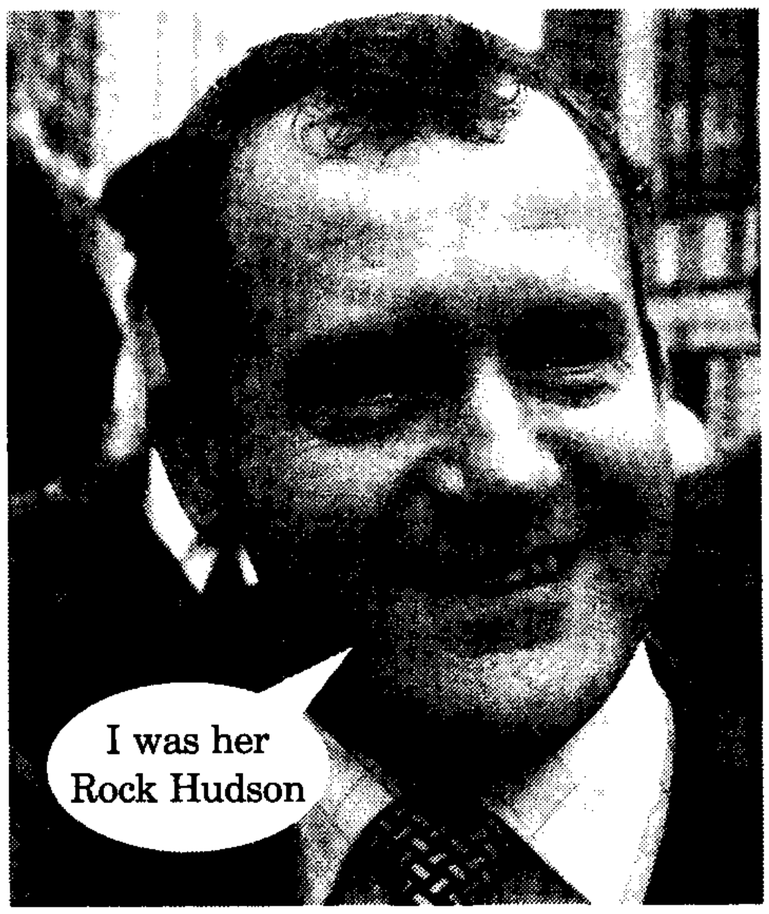
Burrell's memories of that audience, as subsequently revealed to the *Daily Moron*, have caused some ironic amusement at Buckingham Palace. No one who knows Brenda believes her capable of sustaining a three hour one-to-one conversation with *anyone*. And the language of "strange forces" just isn't in her vocabulary. Most tellingly, Brenda would never, ever call a servant by his Christian name.

PS: The fact that after that momentous meeting Charles and Brenda were travelling together (in silence) in the car to St Paul's – an almost unprecedented breach of security practice – speaks volumes. They are all in this together, and they know it.

THE REIGN of Michael Fawcett, Prince Charles's overbearing valet turned "personal consultant", may be drawing to a close. St James's Palace isn't exactly a happy place to work at the best of times. But after the Burrell revelations, with butler Harold Brown about to go on trial for theft with his own story to tell and sell, and former valet George Smith's claims about his alleged rape by a trusted aide of Prince Charles, even "enforcer" Fawcett is having difficulty keeping the house in order.

Fawcett is uncomfortable with the press interest shown in him. The strain is beginning to tell – not least on underlings who, at the best of times, are used to being spoken to by Charles's henchman as if they were a little lower than the corgis in the palace pecking order. Fawcett's brusque manner and caustic tongue have been the cause of much friction in St James's Palace over the years and many feel Charles's indulgent patronage has gone to his head.

He was the man who, Charles's former personal secretary Elizabeth Burgess told an industrial tribunal last year, said she was "nothing but a



fucking nigger typist". Burgess – who lost her claim for constructive dismissal – said: "There was no point in making a complaint about him. Nothing would be done about it. The Prince adored him."

But help may be on the way for those of Charles's staff whose lives are subject to Fawcett's whims. Lord Luce, the lord chamberlain, who came up with a successful scheme for keeping the younger royals under control at Brenda's request, is working on ways of regulating the roles of all members of the royal household. He wants tighter contracts and job descriptions, more employment protection and the introduction of internal, semi-independent tribunals at royal palaces to settle disputes.

In other words he want to try to make the fervid, bitchy, hissy world of the royal households more like a normal everyday workplace.

'Flunkey'

THE JAPES OF GIBRALTAR

DOWNING Street and the foreign office must rue the day they failed to dislodge Donald Anderson as chairman of the powerful Commons foreign affairs select committee.

An attempt two years ago by party managers and the whips' office to dislodge Anderson failed following a rare display of independence from Labour backbenchers and an outcry in the press. But now Anderson has provoked fury with his committee's report on Gibraltar.

Its devastating findings were published as voters in the colony were delivering their resounding "no" to the British government's plans for joint sovereignty over Gibraltar with Spain. Luckily for ministers, though, the report was overshadowed by coverage of the UN security council's deliberations on Iraq. In normal circumstances the committee's cataloguing of ministerial incompetence and duplicity might have ensured that heads would roll. The question now, though, is whose heads will roll?

The committee specifically attacked foreign secretary Jack Straw, "rejecting his view that it was 'eccentric' for Gibraltar to hold its own referendum". It concluded that the "UK government were wrong to try and negotiate joint sovereignty". In a direct reference to former Europe minister Peter Hain, the committee said "it was deplorable for a government minister to have described the pensions situation in Gibraltar as a scam" (some committee members wanted to describe Hain as "despicable").

Hain had used the poor supervision of financial services in the colony as a stick to beat the Gibraltar government. But Anderson's committee gave short shrift to this. The report said: "It is ironic that the British government has given credence to complaints by Spain about law enforcement and the supervision of financial services in Gibraltar, given that these areas are the responsibility, not of the Gibraltar government but of the British government."

Though the government has kept quiet about the report, its reaction to the referendum was swift. Both London and Madrid claimed it had "no legal basis" even though Gibraltar was granted its own constitution in 1969 and Her Majesty's representative on the Rock, the colony's own governor, had raised no legal objection to the referendum or the wording of the ballot paper. The ballot itself was observed by British parliamentarians led by Gerald Kaufman, and by the Electoral Reform Society. Any further – albeit unlikely – attempt by London to reverse the referendum result by ordering another would more likely have "no legal basis".

The Gibraltar fiasco has the sticky fingers of Downing Street all over it. The joint sovereignty plan was hatched as a means of getting rid of a prickly local problem that was getting in the way of the new axis-building exercise between Tony Blair, his Spanish counterpart Jose-Maria Aznar and Italy's Silvio Berlusconi as a counterweight to Germany and France.

There has been one casualty of this sorry affair already. As Labour MP and committee member Andrew MacKinlay presented the report to journalists in Gibraltar while cheering crowds celebrated the resounding "no", news filtered through that he had lost his place on the parliamentary Labour party liaison committee which holds private monthly meetings with the prime minister.

His place was taken by the perpetually brown-nosing Bridget Prentice MP. The message to other independent-minded Labour MPs on the committee was clear.

WATERWORLD

DESPITE an operating profit of 40 percent against turnover (*Eye* 1065), Yorkshire Water was last week given the go-ahead by regulator Ofwat to raise prices by an average £12 from April. Ofwat turned down a similar request by Severn Trent which "only" makes an operating profit of 37 percent on its regulated water activities.

Both companies had urged Ofwat to allow them to raise prices two years ahead of the 2004 price review which has just started. In evidence to this review all the water companies will be bleating about needing more money to improve performance and clean up their act. But don't expect any of them to draw attention to the huge profits they already make from captive customers – most of which subsidise less profitable, non-core commercial activities or go straight out of the door in dividends and executive bonuses.

While Ofwat is meant to "regulate" the privatised water companies in the interests of these captive consumers, it often seems more concerned with the commercial interests of the companies it regulates. When Tory ministers privatised water in 1989 (to howls of anguish from the Labour opposition!) they gave 25-year monopoly franchises to the lucky companies they chose. The only substantial condition was that if the government wanted to end the franchise, it had to give ten years' notice. So the first possible date for any notice of ending a water franchise should come up in 2004 – for termination in 2014.

Nervous that they might lose their monopoly profits, the companies lobbied the director-general of Ofwat, Philip Fletcher. He agreed that the approach of 2004 was creating uncertainty in the industry. "Consultation" followed, most of it conveniently in the parliamentary recess. The consultation must have included discussions with the department of the environment, DEFRA. For on 15 October, Mr Fletcher announced that he was extending the period for notifying any possible termination of contracts from ten to 25 years. Naturally, the lucky companies rejoiced. But whether the move will be welcomed by consumers and the public is another matter. Mr Fletcher's decision effectively removes any competition for licences and makes the disaster of water privatisation permanent.

Sandra Gidley was promoted to the Shadow cabinet as spokesman for women.

Independent

ITV

Mr Right (ITV)

SO, to no one's surprise but the people who commissioned and made it, Mr Right has swiftly proved to be Mr Wrong. Last week the series was ruthlessly banished to the 10.30 graveyard and replaced by *Gardeners From Hell*.

Did anyone notice? Probably not, as ratings had never recovered from a cataclysmically poor start. But at least ITV has proved it can play tough. Like Ernst Stavro Blofeld, it refuses to tolerate failure. Its latest batch of executives stroke white cats while the previous batch are dangled over a pool of piranhas. Anyone with guts or talent left the building a long time ago.

Mr Right is otherwise known as Lance Gerard Wright, a well-buffed smoothie whose self-regard glistens like a tie-pin. In a format devised by Jane Austen (with the help of Franz Kafka) 15 good-looking young women have put themselves forward to be his wife/love slave. In week one he rejected five of them. The remaining 10 then moved into a *Big Brother*-style house together, in the fond hope that cameras would spot them having pillow fights with nothing on.

The following week two more women were kicked out and last week three had to go. Amazingly all of them seem to think Lance is hot stuff, despite his striking resemblance to Dale Winton. But as the weeks go by we seem to care less and less about what happens to any of these people. For what's supposed to be popular television, *Mr Right* is remarkably unappealing. Men won't watch it because they want to hit Lance with baseball bats. Women won't watch it because it makes the Stepford Wives look like hardline feminists. Even ITV's new core audience, the gays, aren't watching it.

Still, it's started, so it'll finish. Last week Lance took the lovelies out two-by-two on jokey "dates" – ballroom dancing or circus training – and then out to dinner at Restaurant Le Snooty. One girl made the mistake of telling the fascinating story of her childhood as a orphaned refugee from the Biafran war. Lance's eyes glazed; she was one of the two he dumped at the end of the programme.

"To evict Scott call 0901 443321, to evict Oates call 0901 443322, to evict Bowers call 0901 443323, to evict Evans call 0901 443324..."

The producers' eyes obviously glazed too: they intercut her story with footage of the other girls at home throwing flour at each other in skimpy outfits. Not that there was anything else for the girls to do. Cooped up in their Category A penthouse, they had no TV, no books, no music – and no idea that the show had bombed. All were clearly hoping that lascivious agents would ring them up afterwards with a view to getting them jobs on Granada Men & Motors. As it is, presenter Ulrika Jonsson nearly gave the game away after Nicola won the viewers' phone-in vote. "It's helpful to have a large family, girls." Because no one else was watching.

Sad, really, because *Mr Right* might have seemed quite new and exciting if it had been commissioned five years ago. But it wasn't, and the only reason it has been now is because it's a pale and dismal variation of shows that have done well on other channels. In the 1970s American television was notorious for leaping on gravy trains. If one western did well, a dozen more westerns would be made the following year. Then if a cop show did well, all the westerns would be cancelled and replaced by cop shows. The BBC and ITV used to stand above such behaviour, but no longer. *Mr Right* is a coke-cynical agglomeration of *Big Brother*, *Blind Date*, *The Weakest Link*, *Survivor*, *Elimidate*, countless chirpy C4 programmes – actually it's quite tricky to name a programme it isn't a bit like, other than *Songs Of Praise*.

Conceived by cynics, commissioned by fools and soon to disappear from CVs everywhere, *Mr Right* has a void at its centre, and that void is a reason to exist. As one of the girls, Yvonne, rather astutely said of the ghastly Lance, before she even more astutely walked off the show, "I just want to see something real, some sort of fire, some sort of passion." Don't we all, Yvonne, don't we all.

'Couch Potato'

MEDIA NEWS

MARK DAMAZER was quick to reassure BBC staff when the *Guardian* reported that "BBC journalists face axe" following the "discovery" of a £200m shortfall in funding. "There is no crisis and there is no financial black hole in news," he said.

The story broke only days after a memo invited staff to consider voluntary redundancy – a memo immediately leaked to the *Grauniad* where it was taken as confirmation of pending doom. Crisis or no crisis, Damazer admits in the same memo that "we will need to make savings next year", blaming the world cup and costly world coverage, and these savings will have to be on the high side.

So where might the axe fall? On the Beeb's unwatched digital channels? Almost certainly not. Now that the BBC is totally tied to its Freeview digital platform, more investment rather than less will be required if the government's target for analogue switch off by 2010 is to be met. BBC News 24, which now competes head to head with Sky News will also need more investment.

It looks as if it will be BBC radio that again has to fight the hardest for its share.

GOING LIVE

BBC royal correspondent Jennie Bond excelled herself on Friday 1 November reporting the collapse of the Paul Burrell theft trial.

She appeared live outside Buckingham Palace for the *Ten O'Clock News*, only to announce that the Queen wasn't there but at Windsor.

She was back live in the Mall again for *Breakfast News* on 6 November following up the Burrell story when she revealed that she had rung the palace press office but no one had answered the phone. The reason, she said, was that they were probably all too busy reading Mr Burrell's revelations in that morning's *Daily Mirror*.

Meanwhile, pity poor BBC News 24 covering the Diana butler story on 4 November.

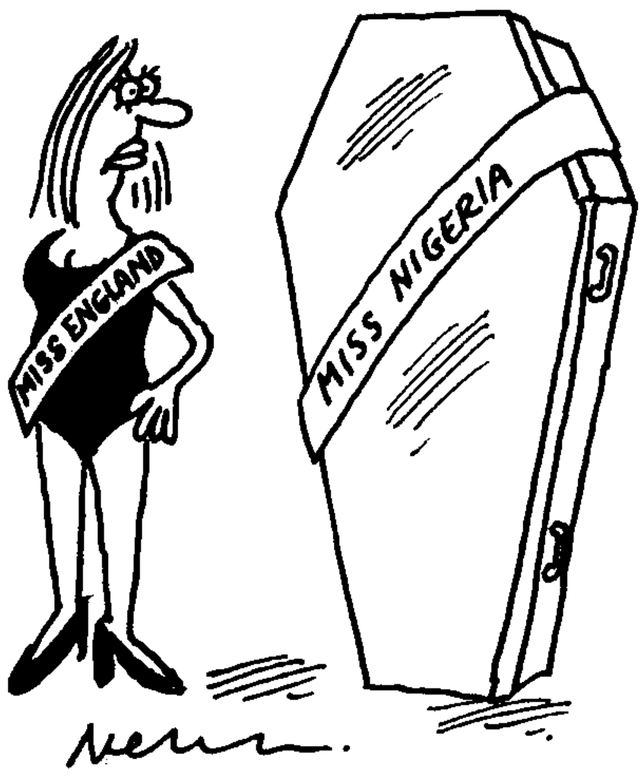
"Live now to Andy Gill who is outside Paul Burrell's house. Is he there?" asked studio-bound Jane Hill.

"No," revealed Gill.

Jane Hill tried again: "Are there any friends or members of his family you've been able to talk to?"

"Not at all," came the reply.

REVAMPED
Blind Date
THE SHOW THAT SET OUT TO FIND A WOMAN THE PERFECT MATCH...
AND AFTER INITIALLY HITTING IT OFF...
THEY FINALLY JUST DIDN'T GET ON
Ratings from last series



DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC2

Anne Robinson: According to the common saying, revenge is a dish best served... what? Cold or on toast?

Contestant: On toast.

AR: What "A" is a small dead-end tube in the digestive system with no known function?

Contestant: Arse.

AR: The church that stands on the corner of Trafalgar Square in London is called St Martin's-in-the-what?

Contestant: Wardrobe.

AR: In the latest mobile phone technology, called "3G", what does the "G" stand for?

Contestant: Gnomes.

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

The Saddams Family

SO farewell then, Gerry Murphy. After months of speculation it has finally been confirmed that the Carlton boss will be riding off into the sunset to take up the reins at retail giant Kingfisher.

Murphy was brought in as chief executive in July 2000 and in the next two years presided over a series of disasters for the firm: the collapse of ITV Digital and the Football League fiasco; the drastic ratings slump and the equally dire fall in advertising revenue. When the company finally succumbed to its inevitable merger with Granada, it was widely felt in City circles that Carlton shareholders had got the poorer deal. Add to this the fact that Carlton also found itself shut out of the new free-to-air digital platform, and it's fair to say Murphy didn't exactly cover himself in glory.

Admittedly much of this was attributable to his predecessors; but the whole point of bringing him in was supposedly to benefit from the business acumen that had made him such a leading captain of industry. Alas, as Granada also discovered, Carlton found out the hard way what has been obvious to most observers all along: it needs someone in charge who knows more about Albert Square and *Coronation Street* than the Square Mile and Wall Street.

Murphy was in fact appointed on the recommendation of Christopher Bland. Could this have been a bad joke on the part of the man who was then chairman of the BBC whose ratings would shortly out-perform the ITV network, of which Carlton formed half? More likely Bland was repaying the favour shown to him by Murphy at NFC Exel where the pair worked together as CEO and chairman. It was during this period that Bland acquired the moniker "Pigling" due to the large cheques and perks he received for sticking his head round the office door a couple of days a week (see *Eyes passim*).

At Kingfisher Murphy will team up with that saviour of Railtrack, Gerald Corbett. Murphy's track-record, however, is unlikely to provide solace for Kingfisher staff. In his last two positions at NFC and Carlton, he has forced through mergers which have seen both these companies effectively swallowed up. In both cases he walked off with hefty severance pay and bonuses, though he has waived these from Carlton in exchange for signing on straightaway to a package from Kingfisher which could earn him up to £12m over the next three to five years.

But will he still be there in five years? And, given his record, will Kingfisher?

DIGITAL television may be a financial black hole for ruined ITV companies and BBC licence-payers, but it is certainly a cash cow for logo designers – especially Martin Lambie Nairn, who hates being reminded of his greatest triumph: the branding of the dome.

He's rebranded BBC1 and BBC2 more than once, and former BBC director-general John Birt paid him a staggering £5m to rebrand the whole of the BBC in 1997. Now, to the despair of the Beeb's own in-house design team, he's landed the contracts to rebrand CBBC and BBC3.

THE effective closure of the Suzi Lamplugh case also marks another frustrating failure for Britain's most famous "bodyhunter", Professor John Hunter of Birmingham University, one of the "forensic" archaeologists who searched for Suzi's remains in Worcestershire. He didn't find anything, which is becoming something of a habit.

Archaeologists can help police *recover* human remains when a grave is found, and Hunter has done so in the past. But he is trying to convince police forces that archaeology is a discipline that can be used to *search* for buried bodies on a more ambitious scale. Not all police are convinced by his arguments, but he has certainly persuaded the relatives of some victims.

Ann Addis's son Alan disappeared in the Falkland Islands in 1980. In 1997 Hunter volunteered to look into the case, and a Channel 4 programme called *Bodyhunters* chronicled the fiasco that followed. After persuading the RAF to fly him down to the Falklands, he told Mrs Addis there was a "high percentage chance" that he would find her son, whose body was "in all probability" buried near an isolated settlement. No body was found, however, and at the end of the programme Hunter said that "even when we came out here we knew this would be a long shot" – apparently forgetting his earlier high percentages. Ann Addis was in tears. The Falklands police had said all along that the "search" wasn't justified.

TV companies love anything that includes the word "forensic" (as with forensic psychologist Cracker), and a year ago Hunter was back on TV in the BBC's *Body Hunt*. This time he was on the trail of Keith Bennett, the missing Moors Murders victim. The programme was a virtual repeat of the Channel 4 one: Bennett's brother Alan was reduced to tears, and a senior detective who had worked on the case had predicted all along that the search was a waste of time.

Hunter appears to think his media exposure advances the cause of "forensic archaeology". So far, however, the main effect of his needle-in-a-haystack quests is that victims' relatives have their hopes unreasonably raised and then dashed.

AD NAUSEAM

ALL advertising is euphemism. If a brand is expensive, it's peddled as exclusive; if it's tacky crap, it'll be unbeatable value. But you can't have it both ways and punters know that "you get what you pay for" is a truer maxim than any advertising slogan.

This has not deterred British Airways, which is about to launch yet another lavish campaign through M&C Saatchi in an attempt to woo back businessman to its Business Class. BA's director of marketing Martin George has said that concentrating on the luxuries of the BA bed-seat will "correct the imbalance between price and product" that has emerged from the recent £5m "Have you noticed how low our prices are?" push.

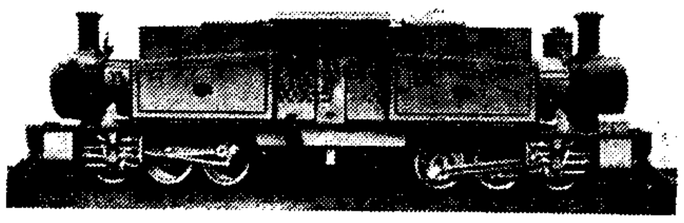
George has no one but himself to blame for this imbalance, because the cost-cutting ads have been running in tandem with P.J. O'Rourke's recent schtick. This took the form of a dig at the low-cost carriers, noting that with BA you still get a meal, a reserved seat and a destination airport that's not a depository in Palookaville. The message was that BA doesn't cut corners. In the same ad break there followed another spot saying that BA is remarkably cheap. It's this contradiction that has left customers ignoring PJ's entreaties for Ryanair's day-glo price-slash bonanza instead.

Ryanair knows that whatever the punters like, they like it cheap; and with profits up 71 percent it's probably on to something. We might be prepared to believe that BA is cheap, or that it is not cheap, but the idea of British Have-it-all-ways is not what admen call a convincing proposition.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

FUR IS BACK:
FASHION HOUSE
D'YOU WANT ME TO THROW RED PAINT ALL OVER IT???
GOD- IS THAT AN ANTI-FUR PROTESTER?
NO, IT'S A HOT NEW YOUNG DESIGNER!
....OR HOW ABOUT I SET FIRE TO IT, THEN STICK THE ASHES TOGETHER WITH MY SALIVA, TO PRODUCE A GORGEOUS PASHMINA..



SIGNAL FAILURES

A RECURRING theme in speeches by Richard Bowker, boss of the strategic rail authority (SRA), is the "cost creep" which must be tackled "if we are to make progress towards the longer-term improvements that we all want to see".

But the SRA seems as guilty as anybody of cost creep.

Engineers who have studied the SRA's decision not to electrify two lines in Sussex and Kent claiming it would cost £154m are baffled. One experienced electrical company is "incensed" by the SRA figure and says it could do the work for about £27m. The company and the official passengers' watchdog have separately asked the SRA to justify inflating the price more than five times when equipment is becoming cheaper. The SRA says no useful purpose would be served by doing so.

How, meanwhile, is Bowker tackling cost creep in his own backyard? By recruiting yet more employees. He reckons that by April next year the SRA will employ 568 people. That's a 100 percent increase in two years and a good 40 percent more than British Rail employed at its HQ to manage all aspects of the railway.

By April the SRA should have 36 people in its "human resources" section alone. Its 25 employees in "corporate affairs" (excluding "media") will compare with about eight at BR HQ. Bowker dislikes such comparisons. "I couldn't care less what it cost BR," he said in September.

Those who do care about the scandalous inefficiency of today's railway should note that the SRA's role is actually much smaller than BR HQ's was: separate organisations – with their own directors and administrators – now handle infrastructure, regulation, safety, ticketing and train operations. And nobody in the railway monolith is capable of implementing major projects, which the SRA and Network Rail leave to mythical "special purpose vehicles" (consortia of yet more organisations which have so far proved too complex to set up). As the SRA doesn't even have the remit or wherewithal to operate trains, it relies on mediocre private companies which demand – and get – lots of extra cash.

One reason for the SRA's burgeoning payroll is that it and the government have belatedly recognised the need for centralised direction of what is meant to be a national rail network. But there are no balancing savings elsewhere because huge sums are *still* being squandered on propping up the fragmented system the Tories devised to free the railway from centralised direction. Network Rail is at last promising to rein in the costs of maintenance; but nobody is quantifying the benefits of continuing to bankroll Virgin, FirstGroup, Stagecoach, Jarvis and Balfour Beatty when they're achieving nothing a new BR couldn't manage.

'Dr B. Ching'

DOWN ON THE FARM

VIRTUALLY unnoticed by the media, the closing days of the last parliamentary session were taken up with a titanic ping-pong match between Lords and Commons over one of the weirdest pieces of legislation ever put before parliament.

The animal health bill, aka the "animal death bill", had arisen from ministers' realisation that during the 2001 foot-and-mouth epidemic they authorised one of the most flagrant acts of illegality ever perpetrated by a British government. Quite simply, in ordering the "pre-emptive cull" which led to the mass-slaughter of some nine million healthy animals, ministers had no legal power to do so.

The animal health act of 1981 specifically authorised the government only to kill animals which were either already infected or which had been directly exposed to disease. But the pre-emptive cull went way beyond this, destroying millions of animals just to provide a "firewall" which might halt the disease's spread. When farmers eventually began to challenge the Maffia's right to act in this way, its officials backed down more than 200 times. They were terrified of seeing their policy put to the test in court.

But no sooner was the epidemic over in the autumn of 2001 than ministers, led by Elliot Morley and Lord Whitty, rushed to introduce a bill giving them precisely the powers they had claimed they already had. Not only would Defra's officials have the right to kill any animals they wished, without evidence that they had been exposed to infection, but it was to become an offence for animal owners not to give officials any help they demanded.

Even if a farmer refused to give officials a cup of tea while they were busy destroying his property, this could be regarded as a criminal act. Thus the bill's real purpose was not just to give officials the blanket power to destroy any animals they wished, without having to give a reason, but to deprive farmers of any right to protest or challenge them.

In the Commons Labour MPs nodded this through without a murmur. But when the bill reached the Lords earlier this year it began to receive the informed scrutiny it deserved, from a cross-party alliance of peers including farmers, like the Countess of Mar, Lord Willoughby de Broke and Labour's Baroness Mallalieu, several outraged Lib Dems, and even Tory frontbencher Baroness Byford.

Lord Whitty blustered away, describing any attempt to stand in the government's way as "reckless" and "irresponsible". But repeatedly amendments to his bill were voted through. Three days before the end of the session, it seemed the government had lost so much of what it wanted that it would have to reintroduce the bill from scratch. But, with hours to go, the Commons reversed the Lords' amendments. Dishonour was saved.

The odd thing is that, since the power to dictate animal health policy has been handed to Brussels, a new directive may soon require important sections of this bizarre act to be amended. So why were ministers so desperate to get it on to the statute book? Was their real motive simply to obscure how far they had been guilty of criminal acts?

'Muckspreader'

DOING THE ROUNDS

Depression Special

LAST MONTH, in case you missed it, was the Rumble in Reno II, a tense debate at the University of Nevada about the merits (or otherwise) of antidepressants.

The original rumble in 2000 claimed antidepressants don't work nearly as well as manufacturers claim, but was hampered by the fact that the researchers didn't have access to all the relevant clinical trials. Drug companies have a habit of suppressing "disappointing" results; but even on the best evidence it seemed many antidepressant medications have trouble out-performing sugar pills.

This perception has now been reinforced by the release of the new drug application (NDA) data sets from the US food and drug administration (FDA) for six newer drugs (fluoxetine [Prozac], sertraline, paroxetine [Seroxat], venlafaxine, nefazodone and citalopram). These were obtained under US freedom of information legislation and include all the trials the drug companies would rather hide in the filing cabinet.

When all the trials are added together, antidepressants offer a very modest two-point reduction in Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression (HAM-D) scores compared to placebos. This difference is statistically, but not clinically, significant, and has been described by researchers as "a dirty little secret".

Indeed, in more than half the clinical trials sponsored by drug companies, they failed to find significant differences between the drug and the placebo.

Most doctors still advocate antidepressants as a frontline treatment for severe pure depression, but the power of consumer advertising in the US is such that thousands of Americans take antidepressants for mild depression or simply when they're feeling a bit pissed off.

In October 2001 GlaxoSmithKline ran an advertisement in the *New York Times Magazine* for paroxetine (known as Paxil in the US). A woman is walking on a crowded street, her face strained, in a crowd otherwise blurred. The headline reads, "Millions suffer from chronic anxiety. Millions could be helped by Paxil." The fact that this advert occurs so soon after 11 September was surely a coincidence, but prescriptions for antidepressants used to treat both depression and anxiety have increased tenfold in the last decade in both the UK and America.

We still lag behind the US when it comes to putting toddlers on antidepressants; but it's clear that many patients are still being given a false impression of the power of antidepressants and, worse still, many are told they are "easy to come off".

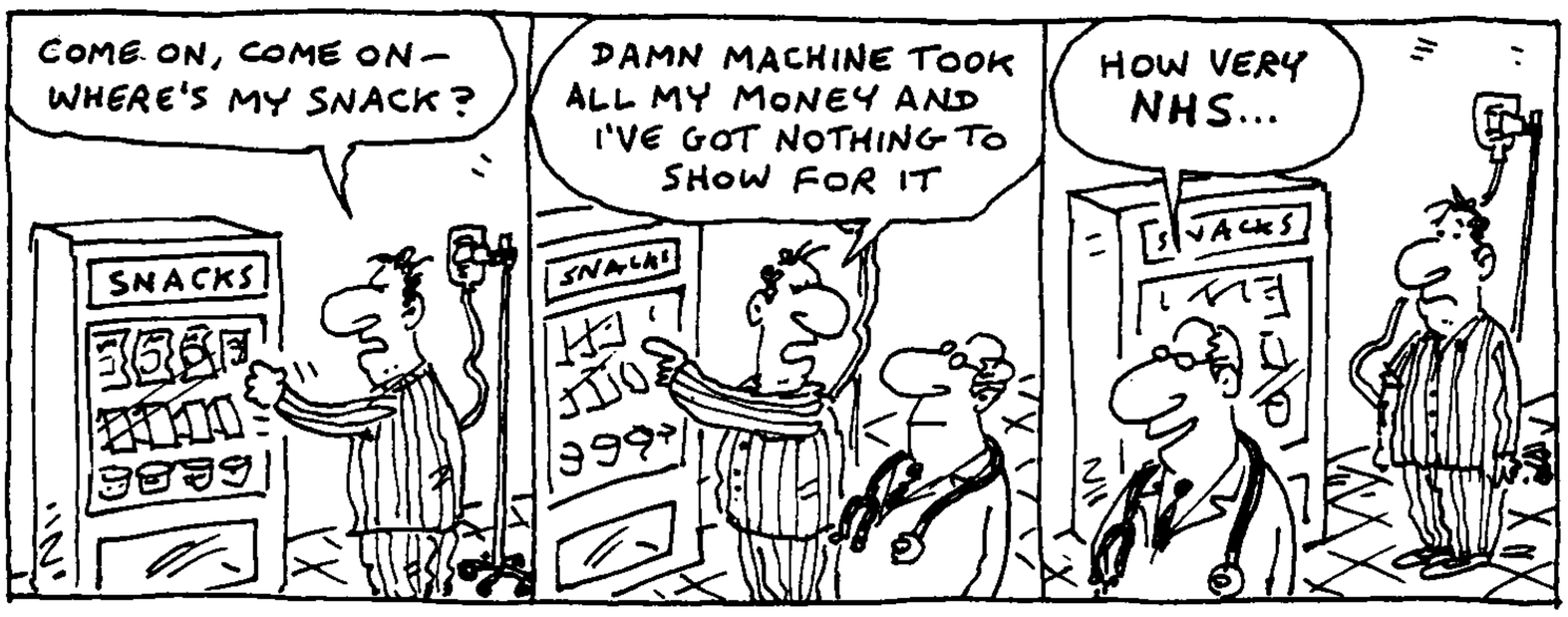
Earlier this year the FDA published a new product warning about severe withdrawal symptoms from paroxetine and the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Associations declared GlaxoSmithKline guilty of misleading the public on US television. And they weren't alone. A few years ago, the Defeat Depression campaign of the Royal Colleges of Psychiatrists and General Practitioners advocated educating patients that discontinuing antidepressant treatment "will not be a problem". Even when the issue was recognized, an editorial in the *British Medical Journal* minimised the problems.

Now the truth is out, most patients will still be wedded to their drugs. They aren't nearly as powerful as you were led to believe; but if you try to come off them quickly, the side effects can be worse than the depression. In the long term, psychotherapy seems to be a better bet than drugs for mild to moderate depression, with a better long-term cure rate and fewer side effects, But it's extremely hard to get on the NHS. Which is why everyone ends up on drugs.

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY


COME ON, COME ON— WHERE'S MY SNACK?
SNACKS
DAMN MACHINE TOOK ALL MY MONEY AND I'VE GOT NOTHING TO SHOW FOR IT
SNACKS
HOW VERY NHS...
SNACKS

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

SEALY BUGGERS

TIME is running out for nominations for Rotten Boroughs' coveted brass-necked councillor of the year award (BNCYA) – but still they come!

Councillor Bernard Sealy, former Labour group leader on Shepway district council, was convicted last month of deception and false accounting: he had repaid a debt by stealing £16,200 from a company he was involved with and covered his tracks with a false invoice.

After being fined £10,000 with costs and ordered to repay the money he stole, the fraudster nobly vowed to "continue to serve" on the council. He has somewhat weakened his challenge for the BNCYA by stepping down as leader of the Labour group, but he says he fully intends to stay on as a councillor. That's the spirit!

Competition, though, is stiff. From Aberdeen comes a nomination on behalf of former Labour city councillor David Maitland, who did the decent thing and resigned after it was revealed that he had been twisting the arms of fellow councillors to approve a controversial new stadium for Aberdeen football club (*Eye* 1062).

Or did he resign? Last week there was a by-election in his former Newhills seat. Days before the poll, however, Maitland popped up and said it was invalid because although he had talked about resigning, issued a press release and written to the council's chief legal officer, he hadn't "really" resigned at all. That's brass-neck class, that is.

Alas Aberdeen's returning officer decided Maitland was talking cobblers and the election went ahead anyway.

● **HATS off to a terrific piece of "new" Labour "blue-sky thinking" in the London borough of Haringey. The *council* wants to semi-privatise its 20,000 council properties by transferring them to an "arms length management organisation" (Almo). A firm of management consultants is being hired for £612,000 to say how this could be done. That's a lot of money for a cash-strapped council like Haringey. But never mind: in New Labourland money for consultants can always be found — in this case from Haringey's "ringfenced" budget for helping the homeless. Brilliant!**

HEAVE-HOVE

MORE THAN two years ago a skilful campaign by residents of Hove saw off Skidrow-on-Sea council's dodgy plan, in cahoots with the Labour-donating developer Citygrove, to turn the seafront King Alfred sports centre into a complex of burger-bars, casino, nightclub and 13-screen multiplex (*Eyes passim*).

Brighton and Hove council, apparently set on having its revenge on the hapless Hovians, now says the only way to fund a modern sports centre is to build 400 seafront flats in nine-storey blocks along the shoreline. With another hideous seafront development pencilled in for the West Pier area, the long-term plan appears to be to turn the currently light and airy Brighton and Hove shoreline into a solid strip of high-rise flats. Trouble is, the King Alfred site is not designated for housing. No problem: the council proposes to alter the local plan to call it a "brownfield" site. Skidrow's councillors, pathetically disappointed by Brighton's failure to reach the European "city of culture" shortlist last month, may yet be able to celebrate turning the place into another Benidorm.

TREASURE ISLAND

ISLE OF WIGHT's philistine councillors may have thought £1,000 was too much to spend on a rather handsome piece of sculpture (*Eye* 1066), but they have no such inhibition when throwing money at their fat cat senior officers.

Latest to board the gravy train into the sunset is council treasurer John Pulsford, 56. He featured in this column in issues 1016 and 1028 when we wrote about the controversial transfer of IoW's care homes to the company Somerset Care in a rent-free deal in which no other bidder was involved. Pulsford, we noted, was the lifelong buddy of Somerset Care's managing director at the time, Peter Day.

His early retirement comes within weeks of two other heads of department showing a cleanish pair of heels to the Island's council taxpayers. Director of social services Charles Waddicor departed for Oxfordshire county council after just two years on the IoW and fiftysomething head of paid services Alan Kaye opted, like Pulsford, for the golden handshake.

This brings to eight the total of Newport nabobs to have bitten the dust in four years. Council clerk (chief executive) Felix Hetherington was made redundant in 1998 at a cost of some £120,000 to taxpayers, while Waddicor's two predecessors, Bob Culshaw and Bill Davidson, both left under clouds within two years, the latter boasting his pay-off had made him "a rich man".

Head of planning David Jaggar won a pay-off earlier this year, aged 53, which gave him an enhanced package of a £96,000 lump sum and £35,000 a year pension at an estimated cost to taxpayers of £250,000 if the happy recipient lives to his full three score years and ten — more if he lasts longer.

Hetherington was pushed aside to make way for chief executive Bernard Quoroll who lasted just half his five-year contract before being sacked in the wake of last year's disastrous general election count, which gave the Island the dubious record of being the last constituency to declare, a day after everyone else. His payoff remains shrouded in secrecy, but £300,000 is thought to be not far from the mark.

BLACK HOLE

WHEN Dame Shirley Porter failed to meet the 13 September deadline to hand over the surcharge she owes Westminster city council following the gerrymandering scandal of the 1980s – including interest, the bill now stands at some £38m – the council pronounced itself "committed to pursuing the debt vigorously" (*Eyes passim*).

So vigorously, in fact, that it has "excepted" it from their annual accounts, a draft of which has been presented to the general purposes committee without Porter's surcharge recorded. A note explained that this was "in view of the present difficulty in predicting recovery". Will the *council* be as generous with residents who fall behind with their council tax or service charges — or is it just the multi-million pound holes in the accounts that are overlooked?

● **WITH terrific timing Derbyshire's fire chief Bernie Cahill last month accepted a 17 percent rise, which put him on £95,000 a year, while arguing the case that humble firefighters not earning a quarter his salary shouldn't get more than 4 percent. With this precedent, it should have been easy for Frank McArdle, chief executive of South Derbyshire district council, to accept the offer of a 7.5 percent rise – especially as he has been credited with restoring the council's formerly disastrous finances in the two years he has been in the job. But McArdle said it wouldn't be fair to pocket a rise himself until an overdue review of all managers' pay is completed — and turned down the extra dosh. *[Shurely shome mishtake? – Ed.*]**

ULSTER UPDATE

ONE of the few things all sides in the Northern Ireland assembly agreed on was the refreshing vigour with which its watchdog public accounts committee (PAC) had carried out its work. Alas its activities are currently suspended, along with the rest of the province's devolved government.

As a parting shot the PAC published a no-holds-barred report on the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. It said the quango had "a culture of apathy, incompetence and lack of respect for proper procedures at the top of the organisation" for many years.

And who does one find at the very top of the organisation? Step forward NITB chairman Roy Bailie OBE, a "new" Labour appointment to the court of the Bank of England. The PAC said the board repeatedly broke its own rules by not putting print contracts out to open competition. And it had shown "quite extraordinary" favouritism towards Bailie's own printing company, W&G Baird, during the 1990s. Between 1994 and 2000 Bairds was awarded NITB contracts worth £1.4m – nearly twice as much as all other print contractors put together. Yet it was rarely the lowest bidder for the work it was given.

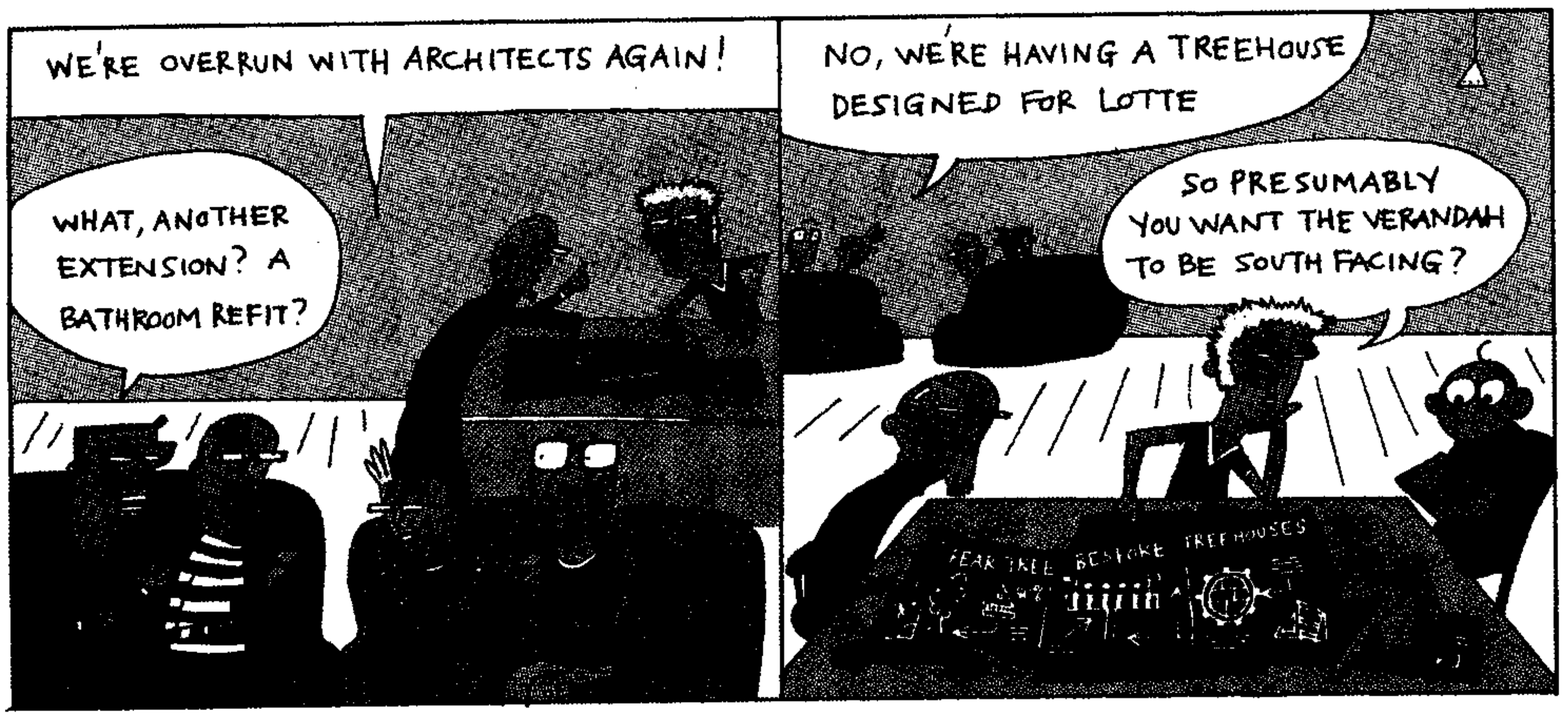
Meanwhile thousands of pounds worth of "hospitality spending" remain unaccounted for on a credit card issued to the manager of the NITB's New York office. Problems first emerged in 1996 but there was evidence the card was still being used "inappropriately" as late as November 2001.

One senior manager who had raised concerns about some of the irregularities left the NITB with a large cheque in his pocket.

Ah well, those irritatingly conscientious MLAs will not be bothering Northern Ireland's civil servants for some time to come. Sighs of relief all round!

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


WE'RE OVERRUN WITH ARCHITECTS AGAIN!
WHAT, ANOTHER EXTENSION? A BATHROOM REFIT?
NO, WE'RE HAVING A TREEHOUSE DESIGNED FOR LOTTE
SO PRESUMABLY YOU WANT THE VERANDAH TO BE SOUTH FACING?

NOOKS and CORNERS

BERWICK-upon-Tweed is a beautiful and special place. Long a battleground between English and Scots armies, this border town retains its Elizabethan fortifications and rampart walls, and has a wealth of fine 18th century architecture.

It has the barracks, now known to be the work of the great Nicholas Hawksmoor, who may well have also been responsible for the Governor's House facing Palace Green – described by Pevsner as "a delicious oasis of old dark trees surrounded by buildings of dignity".

All this lies at the south-west corner of town just within the ramparts – now a public walk – along the estuary of the Tweed; and the rear of the Governor's House can be seen from across the water. Soon this view will be enhanced by a development of sheltered accommodation in the garden of the Governor's House, proposed by the developers McCarthy & Stone. Berwick is up in arms.

So sensitive is the site for the proposed blocks containing 44 flats that Berwick-upon-Tweed borough council, with English Heritage, the Civic Society and others, prepared a development brief. At present, the site is partly occupied by single-storey sheds while the rest is still a cultivated garden. Not unreasonably, the brief insisted that the Governor's House must remain dominant and that any development be modest. So McCarthy & Stone's architects, George H. Martin of 'The Planning Bureau', York, proposed two and three-storey blocks of white painted render, irregularly disposed with the picturesqueness of a suburban housing development.

The brief insisted that "the highest point of any new development must not exceed the highest level of the render on the rear façade on the Governor's House", which is about 7.5 metres above the ground. The three-storey blocks of sheltered accommodation would exceed this by more than five metres.

As the council did not pronounce on the scheme within the statutory period, however, the developers appealed on the grounds of non-determination and a public inquiry is now to be held in January.

Meanwhile McCarthy & Stone have submitted two identical planning applications for a revised scheme. This wily dodge ensures that, if the council fails to make a decision in time, this scheme can also go to appeal. It is just as dense – still 44 flats – but at least arranges the blocks in straight lines parallel to the 18th century Avenue rope-walk. Some blocks, however, are still much too high – one by the town wall rising to four-storeys.

In fact both schemes are too large and ought to be turned down flat. But the situation is being complicated by the fact that the developers are now defending themselves with the wetly ambivalent pronouncement of CABE, the government's Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. Unlike its predecessor, the late and sometimes lamented Royal Fine Art Commission, CABE is dominated by architects and believes in encouraging development – this one included.

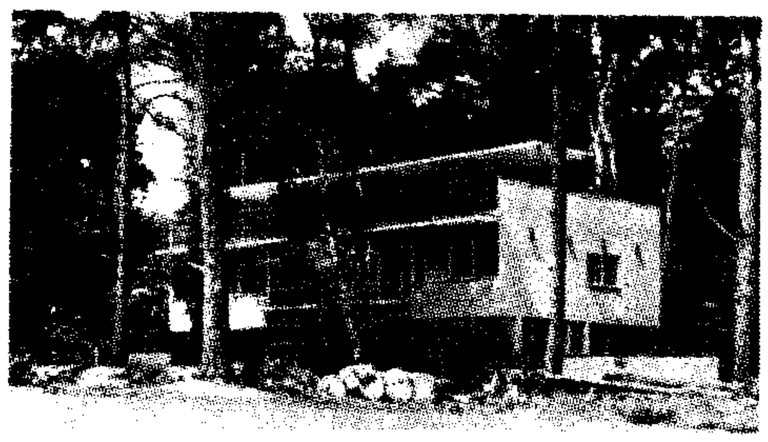
The town deserves better than this.

DESPITE CABE, the government seems curiously reluctant to live up to its vaunted commitment to Modern Architecture.

"Greenside" in Portnall Drive, Wentworth, was built in 1936-37 by the celebrated firm of Connell, Ward & Lucas, one of the pioneers of the New Architecture in Britain. Originally called Bracken when built for Williamson Noble, it is a fine example of those controversial forward-looking "alien" flat-roofed houses that some abominated at the time and others worshipped.

"Greenside" is listed, grade II, but – like many such houses – has suffered problems with the flat roof and metal-framed windows. The owner claims it is beyond economical repair, but no sound evidence has been offered for this. These days, such once-glamorous Modern Movement icons can be effectively restored and they are sought after by pop stars and discerning millionaires. But in this case dismal Runnymede borough council has granted listed building consent for demolition.

The real reason is probably that the house is next to Wentworth Golf Course, to which, claims



this idiotic Surrey authority, it "makes a negative contribution" while being "out of keeping with the established residential character of the Wentworth Estate".

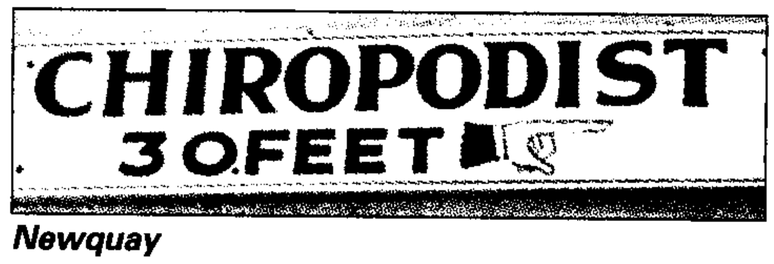
In fact the house was carefully designed to overlook the course and was originally painted "soft green" to blend with the trees.

When the case was referred to the secretary of state (John Prescott), "the minister was not persuaded of the architectural merits of the building" – thus ignoring the strongly contradictory advice of English Heritage as well as the legal requirement to offer such threatened buildings for sale. The Twentieth Century Society is pressing English Heritage to ask for judicial review of this stupid, lazy decision which might set a dangerous precedent. Quite right too.

'Piloti'

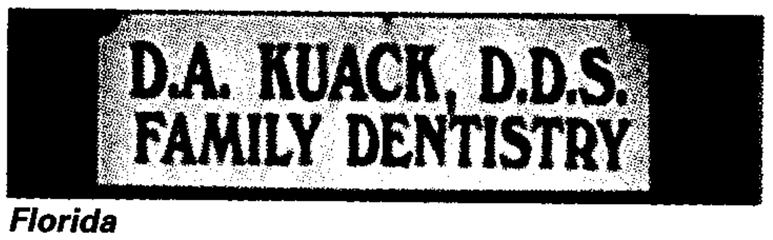
I-SPY

Submitted by D.C. Makin, Sean Guinness, Lesley Mayoh.
£10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*



Newquay

California



Florida

Designer libel

Warballs

"Swindon's traditional diners still have loyal customers. Tina Vogel, 35, manager of Jumbo Snacks in Swindon's market hall, has no plans to close. She said: 'We will always have our regulars. It has been a tough year since 11 September. But the appetite for cooked breakfasts will never die.' Her best seller is the bacon and egg sandwich, at £1.70." — *Swindon Evening Advertiser.*

Fred Macauly: "So are Abba tribute bands as popular as they used to be?"

Benny (member of tribute band Abba One): "I'd like to say they were. Unfortunately things have tailed off over the last year or so, I think as a direct result of 11 September or so I'm told."

— *The Fred Macauly Show*, Radio Scotland.

"Though the events of 9/11 last year may have shocked us to the core, nothing will destroy the spirit of our freedom and our quest for adventure. No other industry can grant us as much freedom as the RV industry. For those who are well steeped in this lifestyle, you know of what I speak. For those who simply happen on to this site doing research about RVs, you will soon understand. Our prayers continue for our country, yes, but now, more than ever, enjoy the freedom of travelling in your Recreation Vehicle." — from rvdoctor.com.

"After 11 September I'm more passionate than ever to help the American people… When I heard what had happened, I wanted to help at a hospital but realised that as I wasn't a nurse, I'd get in the way." — The Duchess of York in *Good Housekeeping.*

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

People slag off the Turner, but what other art prize has the clout to lift you instantly from obscurity to fame?
True.
I mean, who'd heard of Kim Howells before this?
Watch his career take off!
ARTS GUARDIAN
TURNER PRIZE: 'COLD, MECHANICAL BULLSHIT'-HOWELLS
CULTURE MINISTER PRICKS CONCEPTUAL ART BUBBLE.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE November issue of *BBC Music Magazine* prints the winners of a photography competition which aims to show musicians *looking* good as well as *sounding* it (a rare occurrence).

The most striking image shows a cellist playing underwater (not so common either); and the cellist is a member of that boisterously anarchic music-theatre company, The Gogmagogs. They would be leaping around with pleasure at the thought of the publicity this winning image brings them but for one small thing. The company has collapsed as a result of some distinctly questionable machinations by the Arts Council of England.

Music-theatre is a poor relation when it comes to ACE handouts; but a couple of years ago it was decided that three companies would be taken on as clients for core funding – The Gogmagogs, The Shout and Tete-a-tete – on condition they share the same administrator, to be appointed by ACE.

It was a strange requirement, but the appointee was someone The Gogmagogs had worked with before so they agreed – as did the other companies – and the arrangement was launched as a pilot scheme to see how things progressed.

Before long, though, The Gogmagogs found themselves in financial difficulty, with a mysterious cash-flow problem. On investigation it appeared that the administrator was using the company's Visa card for her own personal spending. In defence, she argued that she was holding various amounts – paid out for shoes, clothes and the like – as a sort of security against unreceived fees. But by any reckoning it was improper conduct and The Gogmagogs – shocked by what they reasonably regarded as a breach of trust and armed with documentary evidence – told ACE they could no longer work with her.

They were then shocked even more to be told by ACE that the administrator would remain in place, subject to vague promises that her future financial conduct would be monitored. The Gogmagogs said this was unacceptable. Result: they lost their status as core-funded clients, were reduced to project-status (in competition with hordes of other companies for the odd handout) and have now collapsed.

The company has hopes of some day struggling back to life. But for the time being, Britain has lost one of its most vibrant and, ironically, visible small-scale music-theatre groups thanks to the Arts Council's determination to see through a bizarre scheme that went badly awry. Another case of clients sacrificed to policy.

ALTHOUGH ministers are supposed to deal with the Arts Council "at arm's length", in practice they have often interfered when it suits them. Even so, recent machinations by *wunderkind* education minister David Miliband are raising a few eyebrows in musical circles.

Miliband, former head of the No 10 policy unit, is a close personal and political ally of Tony Blair, and therefore definitely a man to have on your side. Several years ago, on behalf of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra (CBSO), Miliband convened a meeting at No 10 with officials from the culture ministry in an attempt to persuade them to lobby the Arts Council for more cash for the orchestra.

Nothing came of that particular intervention. But now he is trying again on behalf of the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO), which has recently been courting Miliband as well as the vicar himself, both of whom regularly attend Barbican concerts.

The LSO (the self-styled Manchester United of the orchestral business) has allowed a large hole to develop in its balance sheet. Partly, but not all, is down to its acquisition of St Luke's church, near the Barbican, for rehearsals and education work. Anxious to stave off the loan sharks, LSO boss Clive Gillinson recently discussed the problem with his chum Miliband, who in turn spoke to arts minister Tessa Blackstone, who is now keen for the Arts Council to increase the LSO's grant at the expense of its other clients in London and elsewhere.

But why should a junior minister at the department of education take such a close interest in the affairs of the London Symphony Orchestra? By happy coincidence, the LSO recently appointed a new member to its second violin section. She is Louise Shackelton, the wife of David Miliband. Oddly enough Mrs Miliband used to belong to the CBSO when her hubby was lobbying the Arts Council for extra cash there. No doubt this too is a coincidence.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

EDUCASHUN NEWZ

WHAT does a local education authority do when a damning Ofsted report accuses it of failing its schools? It proposes to close two of the country's best primary schools, awarded the government's prestigious Beacon status.

Tyneside council is planning to close 11 primary and nursery schools, including the two top schools, and rebuild a 12th to save £700,000 and get rid of 2,000 surplus places across the authority.

Parents are furious but their attempts to enlist the support of their MP have fallen in deaf ears. The South Shields MP is David Miliband, who also just happens to be schools minister. It is his department which has set the limits on surplus places.

CONGRATULATIONS to Edexcel, one of the *Eye*'s favourite examination boards. Its annual report boasts that the January 2002 A- and AS-level examinations "were the most successful ever".

Eye readers may recall that it was an endless stream of blunders in these exams that led to calls for its sacking, an urgent review by the QCA and Downing Street branding Edexhell as "sloppy".

NO SOONER does Ofsted announce that it is considering offering eight large and lucrative school inspection contracts instead of the current 67 than private contractor Crapita is jostling to get its nose in the public trough.

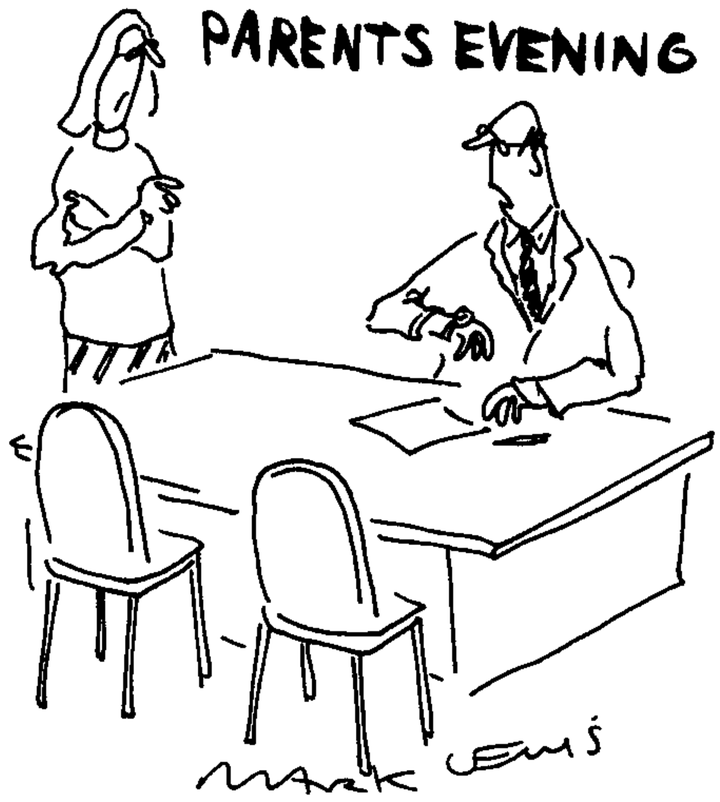
It has already joined four merging independent inspection companies – QICS, TWA, Lynrose and Evenlode – to bid for the £45m-a-piece contracts. Ian Harrison, managing director of Crapita Strategic Education Services, admitted: "We haven't been involved with school inspections, but larger contracts make it more attractive to us." Good to see Crapita so motivated to improve Britain's schools.

NOW that Mike Tomlinson's report on the summer's A-level grades fiasco is over, aggrieved students who fail to get satisfaction from the examination boards can appeal to the "independent" Examinations Appeals Board.

Unfortunately, the EAB has no power to change grades and can only order the examination boards to reconsider. Despite its independent chairmanship, the base is staffed, run by and based at the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) – which many blame for the cock-up in the first place.

NOT content with midnight oil briefings by his staff, Ken Boston, new head of the battered QCA, needed presentational coaching before he appeared before the Commons education committee.

He called in PR and media consultant Webber Shandwick for a session costing £1,780 – "normal practice for this organisation", according to the QCA.



"I was going to discuss their son's truancy"

POPEYE

WESTLIFE manager Louis Walsh – currently raising his profile as a judge on ITV's *Popstars: The Rivals* – has given a grudging endorsement to a new biography of him by pop hackette Kathy Foley. "I think she did a pretty good job – she researched it well," he said when it was published last week.

One of the more interesting incidents Foley recounts is an argument Walsh had with former charges Boyzone during their reign at the top of the charts:

"'You want to see who your fucking fans are? You want to see who's buying your fucking records?' He led them out to the car park and flung open the boot of [his colleague John] Reynolds's car, which was filled with the Boyzone CDs that the two managers had gone around buying up. 'They're your fucking fans,' said Walsh."

Chart-rigging is taken very seriously by both the British Phonographic Industry and the British Association of Record Dealers, who have the power to levy large fines on offending companies. In 1996 Andrew Cleary of Edel records was forced to stand down from the BPI's board when his company was fined £30,000 for bulk-buying its own singles.

Presumably the BPI and BARD will be investigating Walsh's admission thoroughly – and perhaps having another look at Westlife's unprecedented run of 11 number ones at the same time.

Letters

Top gear from Jeremy

Sir,

Private Eye can't have it both ways. You can't on the one hand ridicule the great British public's choice of 100 Great Britons and at the same time complain that the top 10 contains "all the usual suspects".

*And I'd get off your snobby Oxbridge high horse about Jeremy Clarkson's programme on Isambard Kingdom Brunel, too. Like it or not, he has a public style that people **watch**. And when he writes or films something, you can be sure he's behind it with 100 percent enthusiasm. How many other presenters would have brought in such a wide variety of non-history buffs and maybe enthused them sufficiently to watch more of the series? He was a **brilliant** choice to open the series, and I for one learned a lot about Brunel. It was INTERESTING. It was FUN. It was what educational TV is meant to be. And, yes, so far Brunel gets my vote.*

MORAG GAHERTY,

Maidstone.

Pauline conversion

Sir,

I wonder if Blackleg had too much beer and not enough sandwiches when penning the story on the fight to succeed John Edmonds at the GMB (1066)? He calls Paul Kenny, the GMB's London boss, "left-wing" and anti-Blairite.

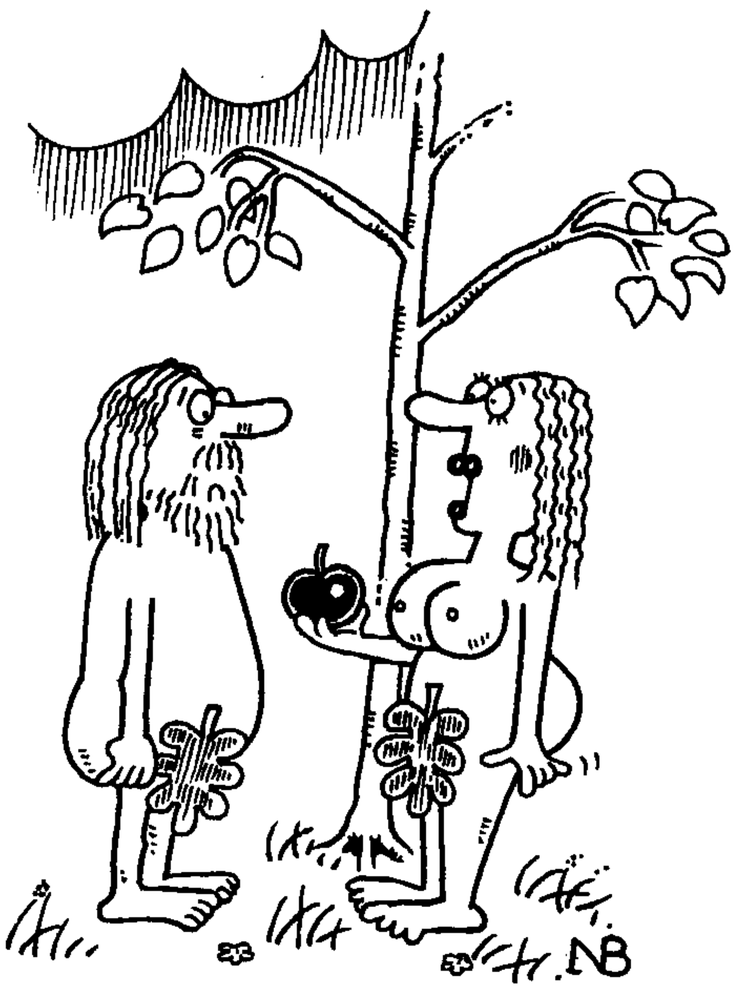
Could this be the same Paul Kenny who at the Rev Blair's bidding in 1999 used the GMB vote on the London Labour party to block Ken Livingstone's nomination for Labour's London mayoral candidate?

Or the same Paul Kenny about whom the Observer said on 17 October 1999: "His middle of the road politics and loyalty to Tony Blair are unusual only because he comes from London, one of the last bastions of left-wing trade unionism. Union colleagues describe him as 'an old-fashioned right-wing union fixer' "?

Or is it the Paul Kenny who now finds it convenient to support Red Ken's readmittance in a desperate attempt to appear "left-wing" to the GMB electorate? I really think we should be told.

Yours faithfully,
ALAN HALL,

London SE23.



"I was preparing for a role in a book"

Eye told you so

Sir,

David Miller (Letters, 1066) betrays a lack of that broad culture so clearly exemplified by the traditionally educated staff of your magazine. He has failed to recognise a well-known Yiddish word – Yiddish, that medieval Low German dialect enriched with Hebrew, Russian, and other Slavic ingredients which, by way of the East End (and New York), has so beneficently added to English vocabulary. It is written in Hebrew letters, and the word "schtum" (like many other familiar slang terms of similar origin) begins with the letter "schin" – so Private Eye's orthography is exact.

We arts-graduate classicists recall Pope's wise saying "A little learning is a dangerous thing"; since Mr Miller appears to be a student of German, he might prefer Wittgenstein's apothegm which in English says "Whereof you do not know, thereof you should keep silent". Other Yiddish words he can study are schmuck and schlemiel.

Yours for public-school classics,
MICHAEL BENNETT,

London NW11.

Lookalike

Lawson

Keeler

Sir,

One the friend of a Cabinet Minister and the other the daughter of a Cabinet Minister; one a Domestic Goddess and one a Sex Goddess. Is there any chance that Christine Keeler and Nigella Lawson could actually be the same person?

Yours,
ANN HALL,

Erith, Kent.

Capper Pass latest

Sir,

Your article on Capper Pass (Eye 1065) misses the point. It was the total absence of any personal injury claims being brought through the normal legal channels that led to Rio Tinto itself initiating the independent claims review scheme. The now established review board, under Sir Philip Otton, equally however, cannot start to operate and request evidence from the parties without any claims. The review board has been waiting over nine months and not a single claim has been lodged. Meanwhile, Mr Russell continues to allege that Rio Tinto has been withholding information. Nothing could be further from the truth and, in any event, that information is not required to complete a claim form. We, and even more acutely the local people concerned, have been waiting over five years for Mr Russell to lodge a claim either through the courts or the agreed review scheme.

Yours sincerely,
ANDREW VICKERMAN,

Head of External Affairs, Rio Tinto.

A doctor writes...

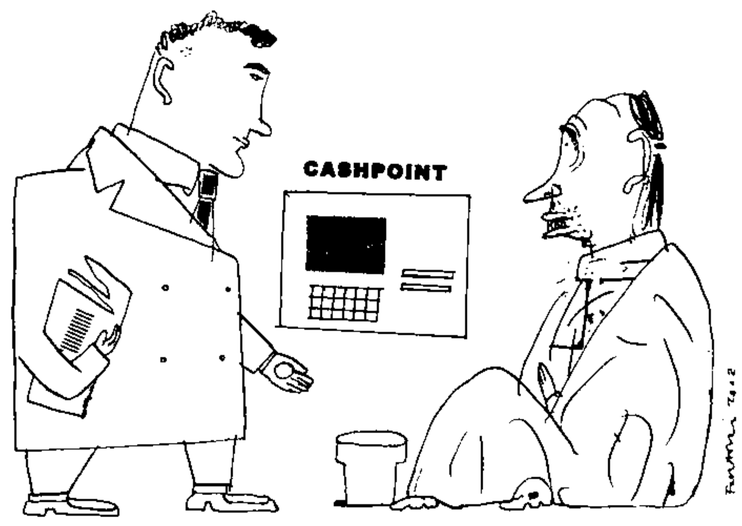
Sir,

Doing The Rounds (Eye 1066) was for once it seems sympathetic to the plight of consultants who are faced with inept managers and political interference in clinical matters. As a result, I have renewed my subscription to your organ.

Yours faithfully,
NICHOLAS M. WHEAR,

Consultant Maxillofacial Surgeon, W. Midlands.

Scenes You Seldom See



"Thanks – but I'm alright for spare change at the moment"

Fête worse than death?

Sir,

Piloti's (1066) reference to the recent government consultation on temporary uses might have given those readers not in possession of a planning anorak the mistaken impression that caravan sites were included in this exercise. In fact, it was 14- and 28-day transient events under the spotlight and not caravan sites. Despite some valiant and quite exaggerated claims by the Council for the Preservation of Rural England and their demand for a clampdown on such outrageous behaviour as charity fêtes, gymkhanas and car boot sales, the government has decided to leave these events free from the need for planning permission. I kid you not that government researchers even found evening cricket matches were a source of irritation for some.

Kind regards,
DAVID GLASSON,

London.

Windy response

Sir,

In Private Eye 1065 you carried an article that suggested that a DTI senior civil servant had been "shunted to a less prominent role" because of a statement he made to the select committee on science and technology. This is not true. John Doddrell has moved to an equally senior post in British Trade International as part of a normal career development move. It was a post that was advertised within both DTI and the foreign office; he himself decided he would like to apply for it, without any pressure whatsoever from anyone else, and he won it in the face of strong competition.

As to his successor, responsibility for renewables has now been brought together with responsibility for promoting the UK manufacturing interest in renewables. This followed a review of the Energy Group within DTI designed to increase the coherence in our approach to energy policy.

H.A.L. EWING,

Director, Senior Staff Management, DTI.

The frying doctor

Sir,

I was touched by your optimism towards the rescue skills of Green Goddess crews attending road traffic accidents (1066).

I am a junior doctor in a three-star NHS trust in East Anglia. We recently received instructions for the assembly of "Mobile Surgical Teams" in the event of major road trauma with trapped casualties during a firefighters' strike.

If you choose the wrong day to get stuck in your burning car, it is your limbs, not your vehicle, that will be amputated at the scene. Let's have a big hand (shurely "stump"?) for the firefighters.

Yours,
E. DOCTOR,

Via email.

Tearoom mug

Sir,

Next time Urquhart leaves the Tearoom, will you tell him that David Triesman is not the chairman of the Labour Party.

He is the party's general-secretary.

RICHARD KIMBERLEY,

Merseyside.

Out to grass

Sir,

Muckspreader and his farming chums in Scotland seem to be wilfully missing the point about Environmentally Sensitive Areas or ESAs (1066). These are designated areas of national nature conservation or landscape importance in which farmers are offered financial incentives to conserve these features, as an alternative to ripping up the countryside in the quest for ever greater agricultural production/subsidies.

Comparisons in terms of ecological quality between bits of wildlife habitat that lie within an ESA, and those which happen to lie outside one, are irrelevant: the main difference is that the latter have very little protection from being destroyed altogether by the ravages of modern agriculture.

Scotland may be covered in "vast tracts" of ESAs, and I can think of a number of reasons it was expedient to favour the Highlands and Islands; but in England they came too little, too late. For example, in 1990 conservationists were campaigning to save the "Culm Grasslands" of north Devon; traditional marshy grazing lands of national and even international importance for their rare communities of plants, invertebrates and other animals. Our surveys had shown that, in the previous six years alone, over 70 percent of these sites had been drained, ploughed up and reseeded; destroying their wildlife value at a stroke and replacing it, usually with sterile green deserts of ryegrass.

The government refused to give the area ESA status on the grounds that it could only designate a limited number of new ESAs; and other landscapes, such as the Somerset Levels, took precedence. As a result the Culm Grasslands were left largely to the mercies of the farmers, and now only a few significant fragments remain. ESA designation, while not infallible, would undoubtedly have saved more of these little-known "jewels" of the Devon countryside from irreversible destruction using the sign language that all farmers understand – ie the waving of cheques.

Best wishes,

JASON HEATH,

Via email.

Spooner-ism

Sir,

On page 13 of the 26 October edition of the Radio Times I am interviewed about my love of spoons. Can't I have a fiver?

ARTHUR SMITH,

Balham Towers.

Right and wrong

Sir,

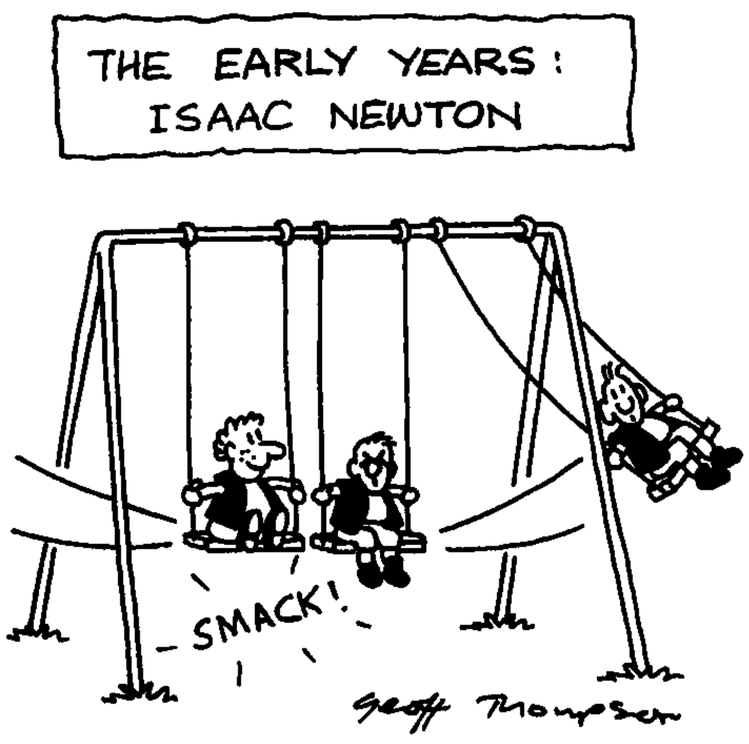
Allow me to be the first of thousands to correct you about Conservative Students singing the "Nazi youth favourite Tomorrow Belongs to Me."

Um, the song TBTM was first written in 1966 for the very anti-Nazi musical Cabaret, so is about as Nazi as Springtime for Hitler. Re students singing it, it may have been a favourite of the FCS oafs, it was also a fave party piece of my (very non-Nazi) student comrades in 1970s New Zealand, simply because it's such a great singing song, if you are drunk enough, which we may well have been.

Best regards,

ALISTAIR FLETCHER,

London SW9.



Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Come on, Bury fans – you've got your night in the sun."
ADRIAN CHILES, Radio 5 Live
(Wayne Mook)

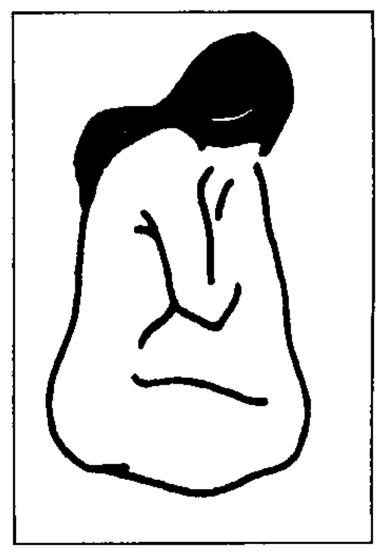
"Champions League takes over centre stage from football tonight."
GARY RICHARDSON, Radio 4
(J. Robertson)

"Zoos provide a very useful breeding ground for extinct species."
LOWRI TURNER, Channel 5
(Rod Swinney)

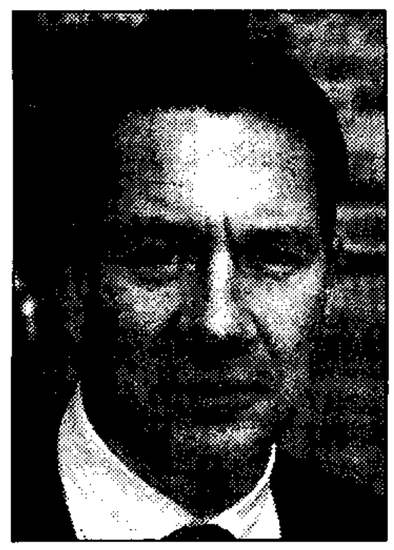
"That sniper story... some bullet points..."
MIKE PARRY, Talk Sport
(Mark Lascelles)

"Let's not put the willies up a lot of people who are having IVF."
SHARON ALLCOCK, Radio 5 Live
(Adam Cooper)

Lookalike



Portillo



Optical Illusion

Sir,

I could not help wondering if this optical illusion and Michael Portillo aren't one and the same.

Yours,

MARTIN J. WALSH,

Isle of Wight.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

THE power struggle that dominates debate over European Union (EU) enlargement and the common agricultural policy (CAP) has almost nothing to do with farmers, consumers, food, the environment or even money. It's all to do with megalomania, cynicism and political dogma.

Leading the charge is our own Dear Leader who now proclaims that "the CAP is damaging to developing countries". And when did he discover the needs of third world people? Could it have been just after he learned that agreement on CAP reform, so vital for EU enlargement, was being threatened by anti-reform countries such as France? Playing the "developing world" card is designed to make Tony Blair and his agriculture secretary Margaret Beckett look good in the fight with those selfish countries which want to protect their own farmers and resist the Grand Plan.

But the idea that every country can become rich through agricultural exports has one small flaw. The IMF and World Bank promote it as the road to development for many poor countries; the EU waves it at candidate countries in the east; and the UK tells our farmers to be export driven too. The US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the other big exporters are desperate to increase sales. But the question no one ever asks is: who will consume all this produce?

The world already has the largest-ever supplies of commodities at the lowest-ever prices. The surplus can hardly be exaggerated and has led directly to the industrialised grain production perfected in the US. As the protein products – meat, milk, eggs – produced by that grain are also in chronic global oversupply, there is nowhere for any more grain to go, hence the current joke prices. The same is true of all other commodities.

But none of this stops the neo-liberal vision of a world of "efficient" agribusinesses taking over from small-scale farmers, millions of whom can then become IT consultants and call-centre operatives.

Lest anyone should doubt that there really are people who think this way, hear the words of Professor Alan Buckwell, chief economist of the Country Land and Business Association, formerly the Country Landowners. At a recent conference he railed against the plan to exempt small farmers from modulation of their subsidies. "It's a bad signal – the more so for the thousands of smallholders in central and eastern Europe. How are they going to realise they are going to have to do something more than scratch around forever on their two hectares of land?"

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

HAROLD PINTER

Do spoons play a large part in your work?

Is that supposed to be clever? Do you get paid for asking that sort of thing?

No, what I meant was – do spoons feature in any significant way in your plays?

If you'd read any of my f*****g plays you'd know the answer to that question. I'm not going to waste my time counting up spoon references, just because you're too f*****g lazy to go to the British Library. Or why don't you go on the internet?

When you and your wife, Lady Antonia, give dinner parties...

You leave my wife out of it, you bastard. I expect you voted for f*****g Thatcher. Or are you American? I hate Americans, you're all up Bush's f*****g arse, aren't you?

May I turn now to your recent award when the Queen made you a Companion of Honour?

Are you trying to make fun of a sick man? Because if you are, I'm going to come round to your f*****g newspaper and punch you in the face, you little s**t.

Has anything amusing ever happened in your plays?

(Very long pause)

NEXT WEEK: The Aga Khan – *"Me and My Aga."*

U.S. ELECTION RACE LATEST

by Our U.S. Election Reporter **Al Qaeda**

THE Republican Party was rocked by tragic news when, during the mid-term elections, polls indicated that they had received more votes than the Democrats.

Disheartened campaigners were rallied by George W. Bush, who told party members that, just because they had got more votes, it didn't necessarily mean they had lost the election.

Electoral experts are however pessimistic, claiming that judging by past precedent, the party with the least votes always wins, and therefore the Democrats had scored a huge victory.

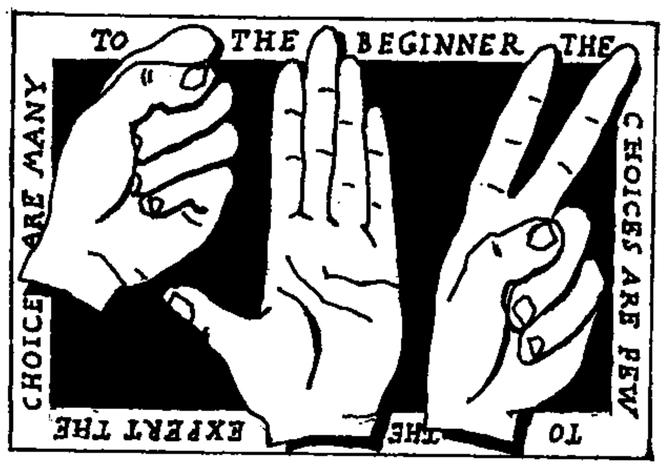
George W. Bush is 38 (days away from invading Iraq).

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "As part of our global strategy to get Rock Paper Scissors used in all households as a safe way of resolving disputes," Graham Edwin told a press conference in Toronto, "we are opening the World Championships to the general public for the first time. Besides the thrill of the sport, there is over $2000 in prize money to be won, so I strongly encourage all amateur and non-ranked players to enter."

Earlier, another RPS spokesman had outlined the history of the game. "The Scissors Paper Stone Club was founded in London, England in 1842, immediately following the issuance of the 1842 law declaring that 'any decision reached by the use of the process known as Paper Scissors Stone between two gentleman acting in good



faith shall constitute a binding contract. Agreements reached in this manner are subject to all relevant contract and tort law.'

"In 1918, the organisation's name was changed to the World RPS Club, and the headquarters were moved to Toronto, because Canada was seen as 'a safe, hospitable, and utterly inoffensive nation, a part of the commonwealth, yet not inhabited by the descendants of criminals'. Our website contains tutorials on the basics of RPS, as well as advanced courses, and players can compete against the RPS computer, which uses techniques made famous by some of the sport's most famous grand masters. Contrary to popular opinion, the number of opening moves in RPS is limited only by your imagination, and I will leave you with a quote from Wojek Smallsoa, from his classic work, *The Trio of Hands* (1962): 'To the beginner the choices are few, to the expert the choices are many'."

The RPS World Championships take place on November 16th 2002 at The Mockingbird, 580 King Street West, Toronto. *(CNW, 17/10/02. Spotter: Andrew Baume)*

—●—

● *"I wasn't trying to be a smart arse, I was just trying to make people think," a Sydney academic known only as John told reporters at the Royal Agricultural Show in Perth, Western Australia. "I entered the cake in the show as a way of stimulating debate about the possible consequences of a US-led war against Iraq, and I'm very surprised and disappointed to have been disqualified. What cake-making rules have I broken?"*

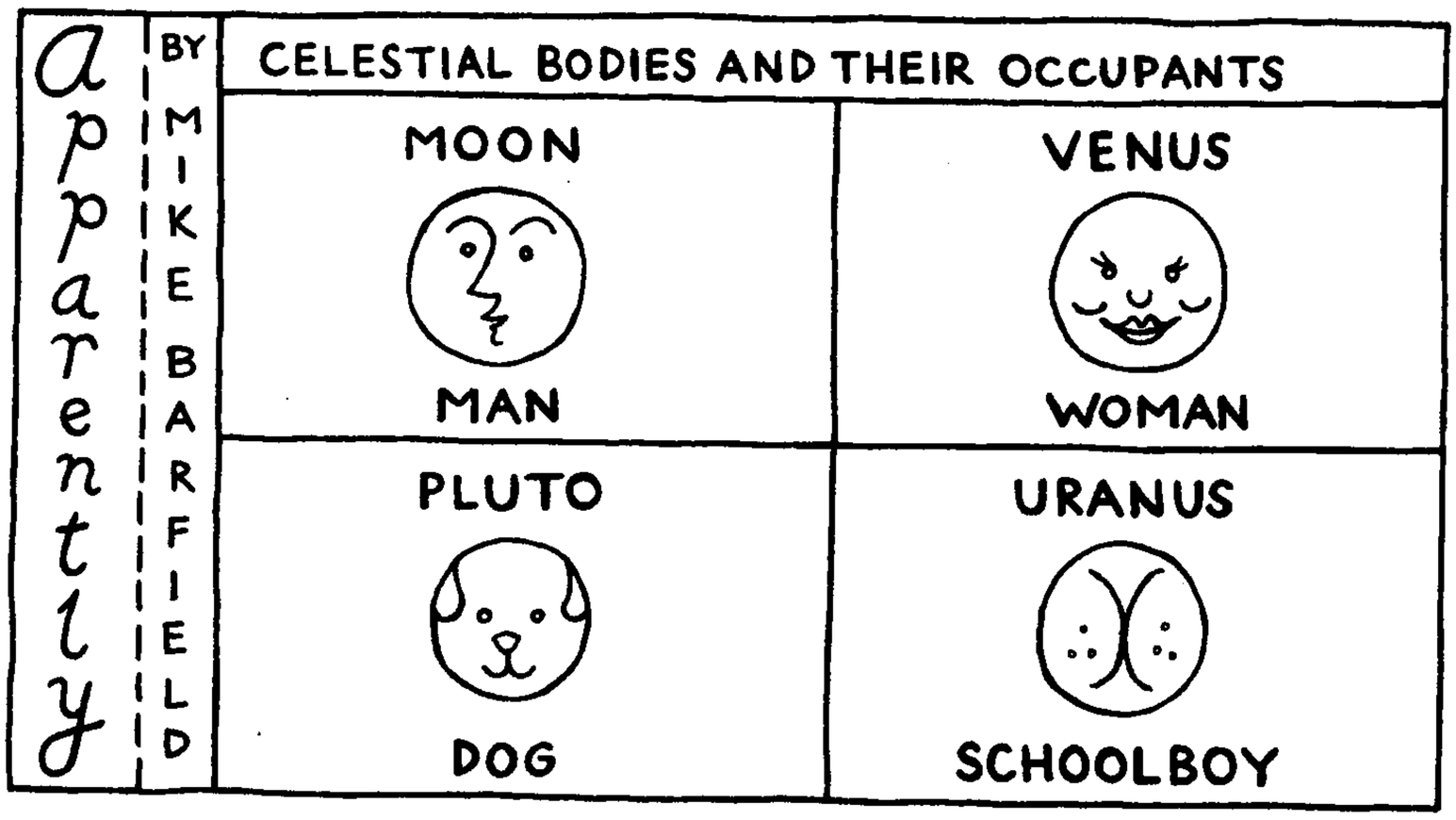
But organisers of the show defended their decision to ban the controversial fruit cake from the baking competition. "The twelve-inch-tall cake was a clear depiction of the Twin Towers in New York, at the moment of the attack of September 11th. The two towers of cake were coated in strawberry jam and blue icing, and one tower had a plane made from icing-covered spaghetti crashing into it, and splattering it with jam. At first we tried to stifle the furore by turning it around to hide the aircraft, but parents complained that their children were still being traumatised by the cake, so we had no option but to withdraw it. The judges' decision is final." (Australian Associated Press, 3/10/02. Spotter: Tony Barrell)

—●—

● "I started drinking colloidal silver in 1999," Stan Jones told reporters on the Montana campaign trail, "because I was worried that Y2K disruptions might lead to a shortage of antibiotics. As it happens, they didn't, but I carried on taking it anyway, until I developed argyria, and my skin turned blue. But I've stopped drinking it now, and I don't see why my being blue should prevent anyone from voting for me."

Jones, Montana's Libertarian candidate in the forthcoming Senate elections, was speaking after questions were asked about his unusual skin pallor. "I turned blue-grey about a year ago, after drinking the silver solution, which I made myself each day by electrically charging a couple of silver wires in a glass of water. Yes, argyria is a non-reversible condition, so I suppose I'll always be blue, but it's not serious, and would not prevent me from fulfilling my responsibilities in the Senate. No, I'm not sensitive about it. People often ask me if my blue skin is permanent, or even if I'm dead, and I just tell them I'm practising for Halloween."

Jones, whose election platform is dominated by a pledge to issue blanket pardons to everyone in Montana who has been caught hunting or fishing without a licence, admitted that he was unlikely to unseat the Democratic Senator, Max Baucus. "But I do hope to do better than Bob Kelleher. He's the Green candidate." *(AP, 3/10/02. Spotter: Colin Marrs)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

It will soon be Advent again. And we've reached the time of year when we look forward to the future rather than back to the past!

By the time you read these words, I will have announced all our exciting plans for what I hope to be doing in the parish over the next year.

As you know, I can't tell you yet exactly what those plans are because it's an old parish tradition that the vicar should keep them under his hat until old Mrs Windsor reads them out at our annual parish meeting!

I know a lot of you are probably saying that it is high time we should sweep away such old-fashioned customs and ceremonies!

But, hey, that's all very well. But isn't there a rather famous old story in the Bible about the rich man who threw away the bathwater and then found that he had thrown away the baby as well? *(Book of Jobs for the Boys, Ch. 24.)*

I'm all for new ideas, and I've got plenty of them! After all, isn't it the vicar's job to have new ideas?

So even though I can't tell you all of my new ideas here – and it would be quite wrong for me to leak any of them in advance of our meeting – here's a little glimpse of one or two of the plans I've got up my sleeve!

As I go around the parish, I see many good things. People showing a greater openness and tolerance towards each other. More women fathers. More black white men. More young old people. More gay straight people.

And, hey, that's a real achievement! Something we can all be proud of! Especially me!

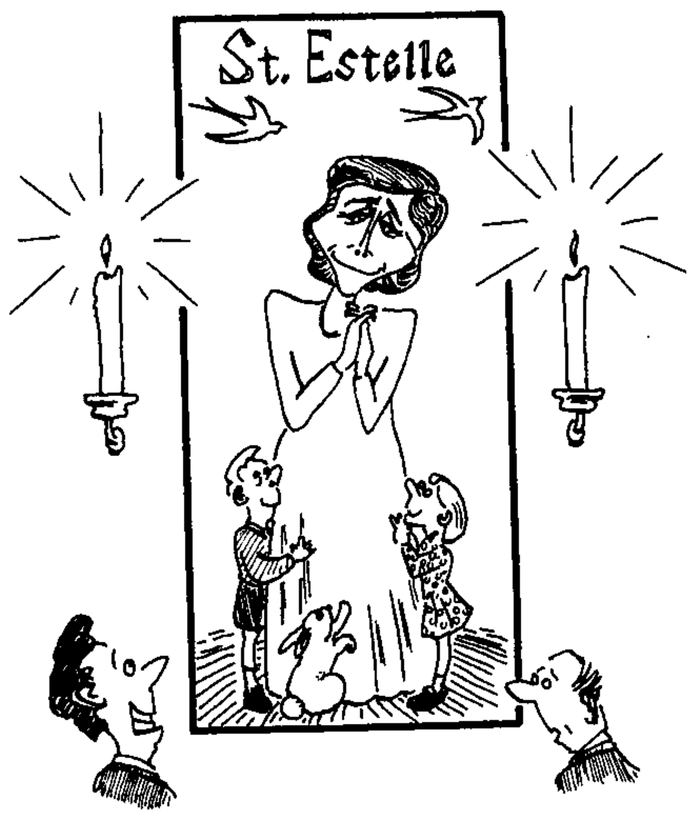
But I have to say that when I walk the streets of St Albion's (which, believe me, I do, quite often, unlike some of my colleagues, who prefer driving around in their Jaguars – not mentioning any names, but John may know who I have in mind!) there is one thing above all which really gets my blood boiling!

And that is the sight of lumps of chewing gum wherever you walk.

I even trod on some last week on the steps of the church!

I ask you, what sort of person is it who would chew gum and then spit it out on the steps of a church?

I'll tell you! Yobs! That's who! Let's take that one letter at a time, shall we? (And if any of the children want to help, can I suggest that parents call them in from their Playstations to help Mummy and



Our new stained glass window! Thanks to local artist, Mr Russell

Daddy. Or, of course, in some cases Mummy and Mummy! Or Daddy and Daddy! Let's not get judgemental in the family situation!)

Where was I? Oh yes, Y-O-B-S. Young. Offensive. Bad-mannered. And Selfish! That's what Yobs are, and let me tell you – we in St Albion's are going to have a policy of complete zero tolerance towards the Yobs and Chewing Gum menace.

This policy has been worked out in every detail in recent months by our good friend Mr Birt, at a series of high-level brainstorming sessions with all the parish experts, including our "Crackdown Czar" himself, Mr Blunkett of the Neighbourhood Watch.

Anyone caught dropping chewing gum on the pavement or sticking it on the parish noticeboard will be punished very severely indeed.

A fine of £50 will be imposed on any yob caught red-handed, and Mr Blunkett will personally march them to the nearest cashpoint (accompanied, of course, by his fierce dog!) where he will ask the boy for his parents' pin-number and immediately extract the requisite sum on the spot! (Mr Birt is convinced that this idea is 100 percent fool-proof!)

So, my message to you all this Advent is "Watch out, Yobs! We're after you! Your days as a chewing gum vandal are numbered!"

This is to be supported by a parish-wide advertising campaign (also Mr Birt's brainchild!) with the slogan "Have We Not Got Chews For You!"

Who says that after five years running this parish I have run out of ideas (even if most of them these days come from my friend Mr Birt)?

Yours, Tony

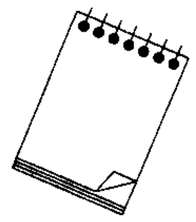
A Message From the Rev Dubya Bush, First Minister of the Church of the Latter-Day Morons

Greetings to my old friend Rev. Terry Bloop and his good lady Charmaine! Many thanks for all your messages of congratulations to me for the resounding vote of support I have just received from my own congregation. The people have spoken, and now we can go forward together to kick the ass of the Great Satan who dwells in his tent of iniquity somewhere in the Baghdad area. You and I, Rev. Bloom, today stand alone as allies in this Holy Shoot-Out With Destiny! I must go now, Timmy, for I have God's work to do!

Your friend, Dubby!

PS. I have installed my own website so you can get your instructions at any hour of the day or night. Just log on to: dubyadubyadubya.dubyabush.com

New PCC Timetable



● *We are all grateful to Mr Cook for rearranging the PC timetable. Gone at last are the days when PCC members could be expected to stay up until 10 o'clock, discussing parish business. It is obviously much more sensible if we get through our business in the mornings. Mr Cook has told me that he personally has got much better things to do in the evenings, and I think we all know what he means! T.B.*

Correction

Some of you may have been a bit worried by Mr Blunkett's warning that the world was going to end on Tuesday with bombs exploding and poison gas filling the sky.

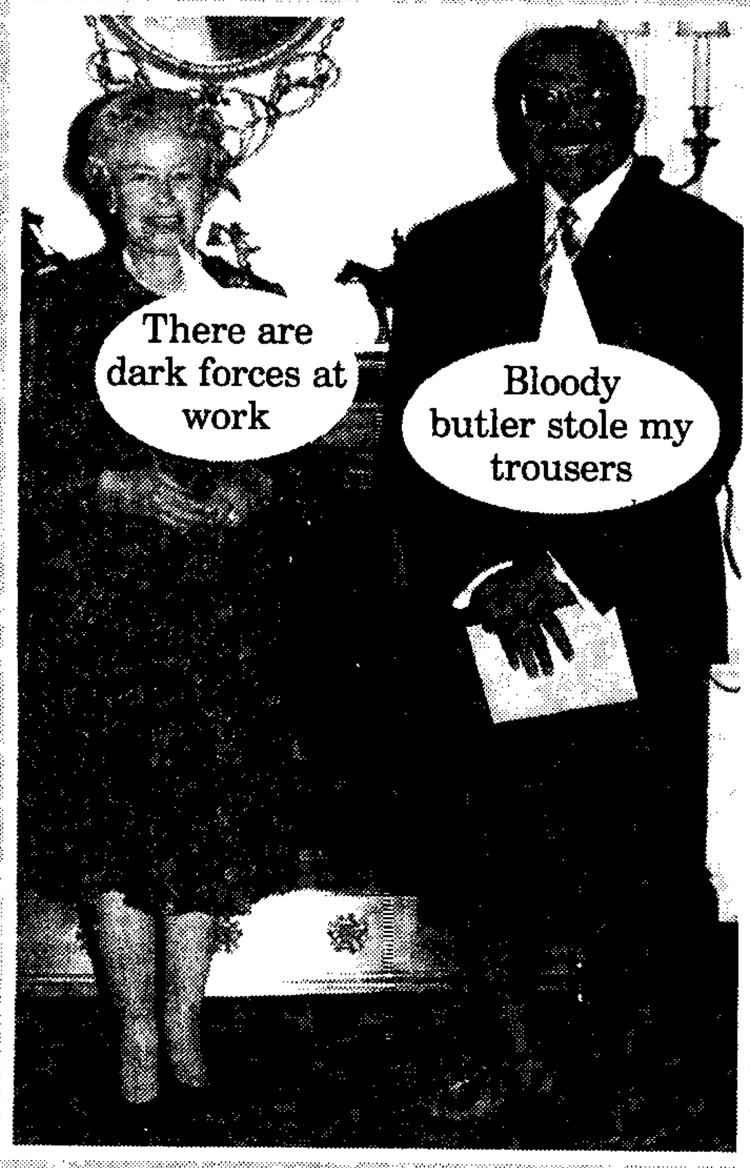
You will be reassured to know that Mr Blunkett has now had second thoughts and realises that there is no need for alarm after all.

In the immortal words of St Jones of Warmington-on-Sea, "Don't panic! Don't panic!" It's good advice, so take it!! T.B.

THE WEEK IN PICTURES

KNACKER SPELLS IT OUT

NEW ROYAL SHOCK



CHARLES SPEAKS OUT

BUTLER SCREWED BY RED TOP RAPISTS

by Our Press Staff **Roy Greenstuff**

A ROYAL BUTLER last night told how he was savagely assaulted by a gang of tabloid editors who took it in turns to abuse him.

The butler said, "Just because I got into bed with Piers Morgan, the rest of them ganged up on me. It was a nightmare and I am still in a state of *(cont. £94 million)*

BLAIR TO DROP OPENING OF PARLIAMENT

by Our Political Staff **Simon Hogwarts**

THE PRIME Minister Tony Blair has announced that the state opening of Parliament is to be abolished.

Said a spokesman, "Tony feels that it is outmoded and unnecessary.

"In a modern age, he believes that there is no need for parliament to be open at all and that MPs' time could be better spent doing what he said."

TV Highlights

The Project

BBC1 9pm

GRIPPING, realistic Facu-drama based on meticulous research over seven years. A group of young, idealistic programme-makers decide to join the BBC in order to make a gripping, realistic facu-drama about New Labour.

Despite high hopes, they become increasingly disillusioned when the project turns out to be extremely long and rather dull.

They feel that the general public has been apathetic and have been turned off television *(cont. p. 94)*

'MOON IS A FAKE' Claim Nutters

by Our NASA staff **Loon O'Tick**

A GROWING body of internet-based madmen are now convinced that the moon is nothing more than a giant photo hanging in the sky, put there by the U.S. government to fool the Russians. *(Reuters)*

PRISONERS DEMAND NEW RIGHTS

by Our Prison Staff **Phil Jail**

IN THE light of the landmark ruling to allow prisoners free access to hardcore pornography under the Human Rights Acts, Britain's prisoners are now demanding the right to be set free.

"Being locked up is a clear infringement of my personal liberty," said one mass murderer, "and I should be let out at once."

(Rotters)

CLASSIC COMEDY ENDS RUN

by Our TV Staff **Simon Hefferlump**

THE CULT comedy show *The Central Office* ended its run last night, following a hilarious series of embarrassing episodes.

The show chronicled the cringe-making antics of the worst boss in the world, Iain Duncan Smith, played by actor David Brent.

Great Plots

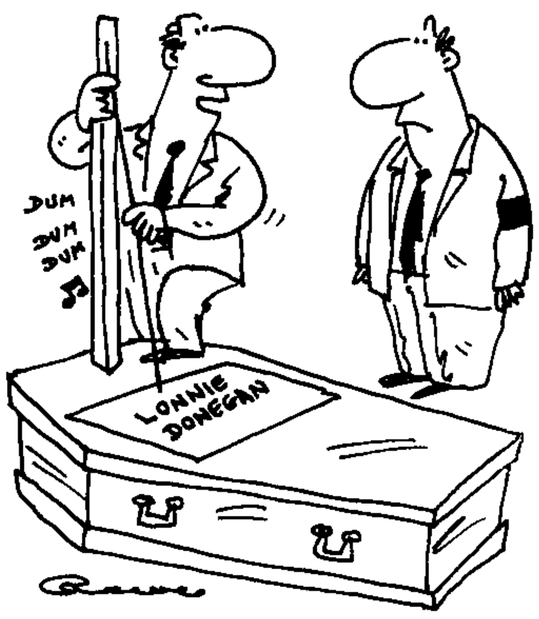
Viewers were left in toe-curling agony when in the final instalment IDS was sacked and begged for his job back.

This followed his dire attempt to become a motivational speaker and his dismal efforts to tell jokes. Critics feel that the comedy cannot possibly get any better and that *The Central Office* should now stop for good.

Great Tory

Viewers, however, love the show and have begged the producers for more of IDS's excruciating exploits.

But with a new boss in charge would *The Central Office* ever be the same again?



"It's what he would have wanted"

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Lonnie Donegan, singer of *Rock Island Line* and other hits

So. Farewell
Then Lonnie
Donegan,
King of
Skiffle.

Skiffle.
It is a strange
Word.

What does it
Mean?

Now you are
Gone
Perhaps we shall
Never know.

E. J. Thribble (17½)

THE SUN SAYS

Treachery of the Butler

WITH HIS decision to air Princess Diana's most intimate secrets, Paul Burrell has betrayed the Queen, Diana, the Prince of Wales, Prince William and all the Spencer family.

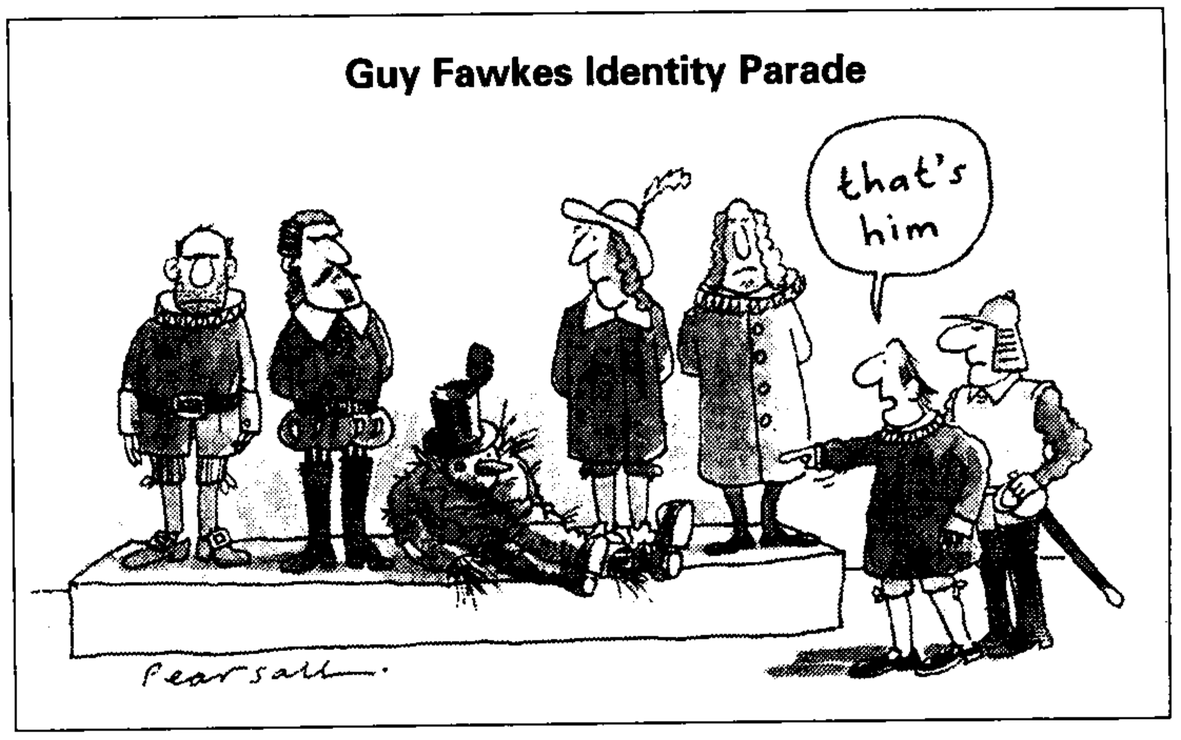
The culture that celebrates the villain, turning them into some sort of folk here, whilst totally forgetting the suffering of their victims must be stamped out.

But who cares? He has also committed the ultimate act of treachery.

And that, of course, is – selling his downmarket drivel to a rival paper.

We will never forget this craven act of treachery.

We say, "Burrell should rot in jail" (or ring us up with the real dirt on the gay footman – money no object).



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

David Shayler

- Employed on Her Majesty's Secret Service
- Took sensitive material without permission – this later ended up in the papers.
- Sentenced to six months in jail.

Paul Burrell

- Employed on Her Majesty's Secret Service.
- Took sensitive material without permission – this later ended up in the papers.
- Sentences for Piers Morgan for £300,000.

GAY ADOPTION STORM ROCKS TORY PARTY

by Our Political Staff **John Duncan Bercough**

HUMAN rights groups were in disarray last night over the vexed question of whether homosexuals should be allowed to adopt the Conservative Party.

"This is a vulnerable party," said one opponent. "What it needs is stability inside a long-term relationship – not being saddled with Michael Portillo whose lifestyle is just not suited to a committed relationship with a political party."

The unnamed spokesman continued, "Can you imagine Michael putting in the hours to nurture the Tory Party through the difficult years ahead? Of course not. He'll just flounce off at some point and make a TV documentary."

IDS Victim

But this view was denounced as "pure homophobia" by liberal critics.

"The Tory Party will be lucky to be adopted by anyone and if there is a gay person willing to take on the responsibility of looking after it, then society should be jolly well grateful."

the PREMIERSH*TS

PAUL WOOD

BLARNEY STONE
IRISH F.A.
IT'S A UNIQUE TRADITION AND ONE THAT WE THINK WILL HELP THE NEXT MANAGER OF IRELAND...
SO IF YOU WANT THE JOB JUST LIE BACK...
BLARNEY STONE
KEANE
AND GIVE HIM A LITTLE PECK!

EXCLUSIVE TO PRIVATE EYE

In a sensational exclusive interview with Private Eye, royal butler PAUL BURRELL reveals to the world for the first time the full details of his top-secret three-hour in-depth heart-to-heart interview with Her Majesty the Queen.

I SHALL never forget the day when Her Majesty the Queen rang up to ask me round to the Palace to, as she put it, "have a little chat".

When I was shown in to her drawing room at the Palace, there were just the two of us.

Me and the Queen of England. Asking for my advice.

I have often heard it said that the Queen is cold and aloof.

This is completely untrue, as she asked me to wait half-an-hour for her to finish her luncheon.

Made It Up

"Paul," she said, calling me by my christian name and offering me a place to stand on the carpet, "you are the most loyal of all the royal servants, and I really appreciate all that you have done for Diana and the whole of our family."

From these words, it should be clear that there was no feud between the two women, as so many people have alleged.

I know this because I served both of them, although I am too loyal even to comment on this publicly in a newspaper.

The Queen then asked me whether I was still looking after any of the late Princess's personal effects.

"Indeed, Ma'am, I am," I told

her, "and I regard it as a sacred trust to guard her property in perpetuity for the sake of posterity."

There was no doubting the look of gratitude which came over Her Majesty's face, as she realised that I was truly the rock on which the whole ship of Britain's monarchy would founder. *(Surely "could safely rest"? Ed.)*

Before our historic interview was terminated, Her Majesty placed a finger to her lips and gave me an astonishing warning.

"Paul," she said, "it is very dark outside this room. I am very worried that you might fall downstairs and be killed, before you can sell your story to Private Eye."

© *Roll Out The Burrell Productions.*

Why I Chose Private Eye To Tell My Story

As told by Paul Burrell to Phil Space

I HAVE had many offers for my story from the world's media.

But I had no hesitation in choosing Private Eye for one simple reason.

Private Eye is Her Majesty's favourite reading. She has a copy delivered to her bedroom every morning. It is the first paper she reads and she believes everything in it.

That is why I know that she is reading this very piece, thanking me for being so loyal by writing about her in the Mirror.

WHAT DID THE QUEEN MEAN?

■ *YOU* DECIDE ■

THE WHOLE nation is asking what the hell was the Queen talking about when she warned barmy butler Burrell about "dark forces" being at work behind the scenes of our country? Did she really mean:

A "Dark forces" – secret services who were out to kill the Royal Family?

B "Dark faces" – referring to the Al-Fayed family who were out to kill the Royal Family?

C "Dark horses" – referring to 100-1 outsiders Nancy Boy and Tight Trouser in the 3.45 at Chepstow, who were out to bankrupt the Queen Mother?

D "Dark glasses" – referring to the polaroid spectacles worn as a fashion accessory by Prince William?

E "Darth Vader" – referring to the much-loved character in the Star Wars quadriology, who was out to take over the universe?

F "Clarke forces" – referring to the sinister band of Tory conspirators, who were out to kill Iain Duncan Smith and take Britain into the euro.

Phone in your answers to Boris Johnson, editor of the Spectacularlyboring. He won't be there, but you can leave a message with one of his gifted staff.

ONLY IN THIS WEEK'S PRIVATE EYE

Those Astonishing Paul Burrell Revelations In Full!!!

- *The Queen was a bit cold!!!*
- *Diana was a bit flaky!!!*
- *The Spencers were a bit nasty!!!*
- *Dodi was a bit Egyptian!!!*
- *I served them all soup!!!*
- *Er... That's it.*

NURSERY TIMES
Friday, November 15, 2002

QUEEN OF HEARTS IN DRAMATIC KNAVE TRIAL SENSATION

by Our Court Reporter **JENNY FLECT**

THE TRIAL of the Knave of Hearts collapsed yesterday after the Queen of Hearts suddenly remembered that she had had a conversation with the accused concerning the allegedly stolen tarts.

A palace spokesman told the court that the knave had mentioned to her in passing that he was going to keep a number of tarts "for safe-keeping" and she had made no objection.

The police case rested on a raid of the knave's flat in Nursery Town where they found 412 separate tarts and a pie containing four-and-twenty blackbirds bearing the legend "To Her Majesty The Queen Of Hearts From The Sultan Of Brunei".

The police maintained that the knave had been trying to sell the tarts in America, but he had always denied this.

"The Queen of Hearts came through for me," he said. "I was her rock cake and now my loyalty and integrity have been vindicated. Now I am going to sell my story to the Daily Looking Glass for a fortune."

ON OTHER PAGES

'Prince Charming Was Sex Fiend' claims Snow White **3**

'He Groped Me Too' claims Sleeping Beauty **4**

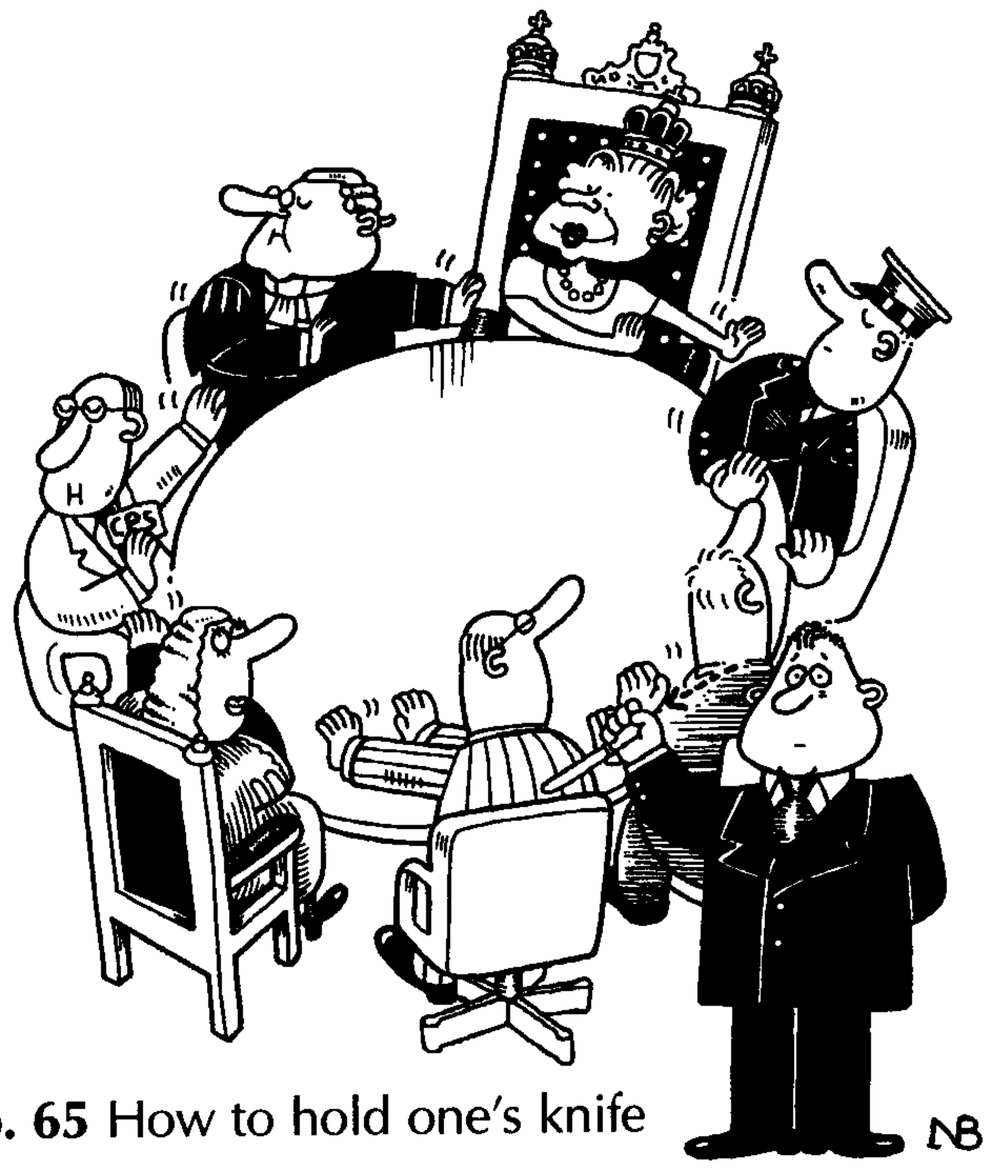
Plus

Little Miss Muffetella's Special Curds And Whey Recipe – "Watch me lick it off my fingers! Mmmm" **94**

Entertaining With Style

101 Tips On Etiquette

No. 43 Pass the buck to the left



No. 65 How to hold one's knife

NB

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

How they speak

Letters to the Editor

The Queen and Mr Burrell

SIR – Contrary to reports, I wish to make it clear that throughout the unhappy events surrounding the trial of Mr Burrell, Her Majesty the Queen behaved with the utmost propriety in every way, and entirely in keeping with her position as head of the judiciary, head of the Church of England, proprietress of the Royal Mail and my close personal friend. It is simply untrue to suggest that Her Majesty is less than perfect in any respect. Under our constitution, the monarch is under no obligation to do anything whatsoever and she has fulfilled this role with exemplary grace, courage, dignity, fortitude, wisdom and leopard-skin accessories for over a million years *(please check)*.
Lord Arsehole of Fawnsley
House of Lords

SIR – Yet again, I have been forced to go on television to warn that the latest scandal to engulf the Royal Family can only result in the immediate collapse of our long-discredited monarchy. One thing is clear from this trial: that the so-called Queen should be immediately arrested for deliberately perverting the course of justice, and wasting police time. The whole thing is enough to make any intelligent person want to leave the country, and then come back to appear on television attacking the Queen.
Lady Antonia Holden
Authoress of *My Friend Prince Charles* (1978), *Charles Is A Bastard* (1986), *Damn You England – Why I Am Emigrating* (1999), *My Big Apple* (2000), *Coming Back Home* (2002)

SIR – So now we know what the butler saw! He saw Her Majesty!
Mike Giggler
Via email

SIR – So now we all know – the butler *didn't* do it!
Michelle Giggler
Via email

(That's enough Gigglers, Ed.)

COUGH DROPS BOMBSHELL

by Our Political Staff **Lucy Locketts**

THE TORY Party was rocked to its foundations again today when its leader, Mr Iain Duncan Cough, at last broke his year-long silence by issuing a public statement.

Thousands of journalists were summoned to Conservative Central Office to hear Mr Cough read out the following historic words: "Sack me or I quit."

Last Nail in Cough

There were gasps as the full significance of what he had said dawned on the assembled media representatives.

"Either the party unites to get rid of me or I will have to resign," Mr Cough spluttered. "There is no other way."

Looking tired but useless, the Tory leader then faced a barrage of hostile questions from leading members of his own party.

The Ids of March

"Is this the end for you?" shouted Mr Kenneth Clarke. "Are you finished?" yelled Mr Michael Portillo.

"Why couldn't you keep quiet like we told you?" whispered Mr David Davies.

But Mr Cough *(contd p. 94)*

Washed-Up Man On Desert Island Discs

Those IDS Choices In Full

1. ***The Clarke Ascending*** *(Ralph Rowan-Williams)*
2. ***Ancram's Aweigh*** – Band of the Royal Marines
3. *Haydn's* ***194th Symphony*** *(the* ***"Very Quiet"****)*
4. *Rimsky-Dunkankov's* ***Symphony in John Major*** *(The* ***"Maastricht"****)*
5. ***Just One Portillo*** *("Arsole Mio")* trad.
6. ***On My Bike*** – Normo and the Tebbs
7. ***The Finished Symphony*** *(Schubert)*
8. ***Goodbyee*** – Cook (Robin) and Moore (Charles)

Livingstone to launch his own newspaper at cost of £1.8m

The Independent

Red Ken To Launch New Newspaper For London

by Our Media Staff **Ben D. Bus**

KEN LIVINGSTONE, the Mayor of London, is to spend £1 billion of taxpayers' money on providing Londoners with an alternative to the Evening Standard.

Given away free, the first edition of the Evening Newts will contain 847 pictures of the Mayor himself, and 76 of his aquatic companion Lenin.

Newtmaster

Londoners will also be given ideas on how to alleviate congestion in their aquariums. Mr Livingstone explains his proposals to levy a charge of £5 on any newts entering central London between 9am and 6pm.

ART WORLD IN 'BULLSHIT' STORM

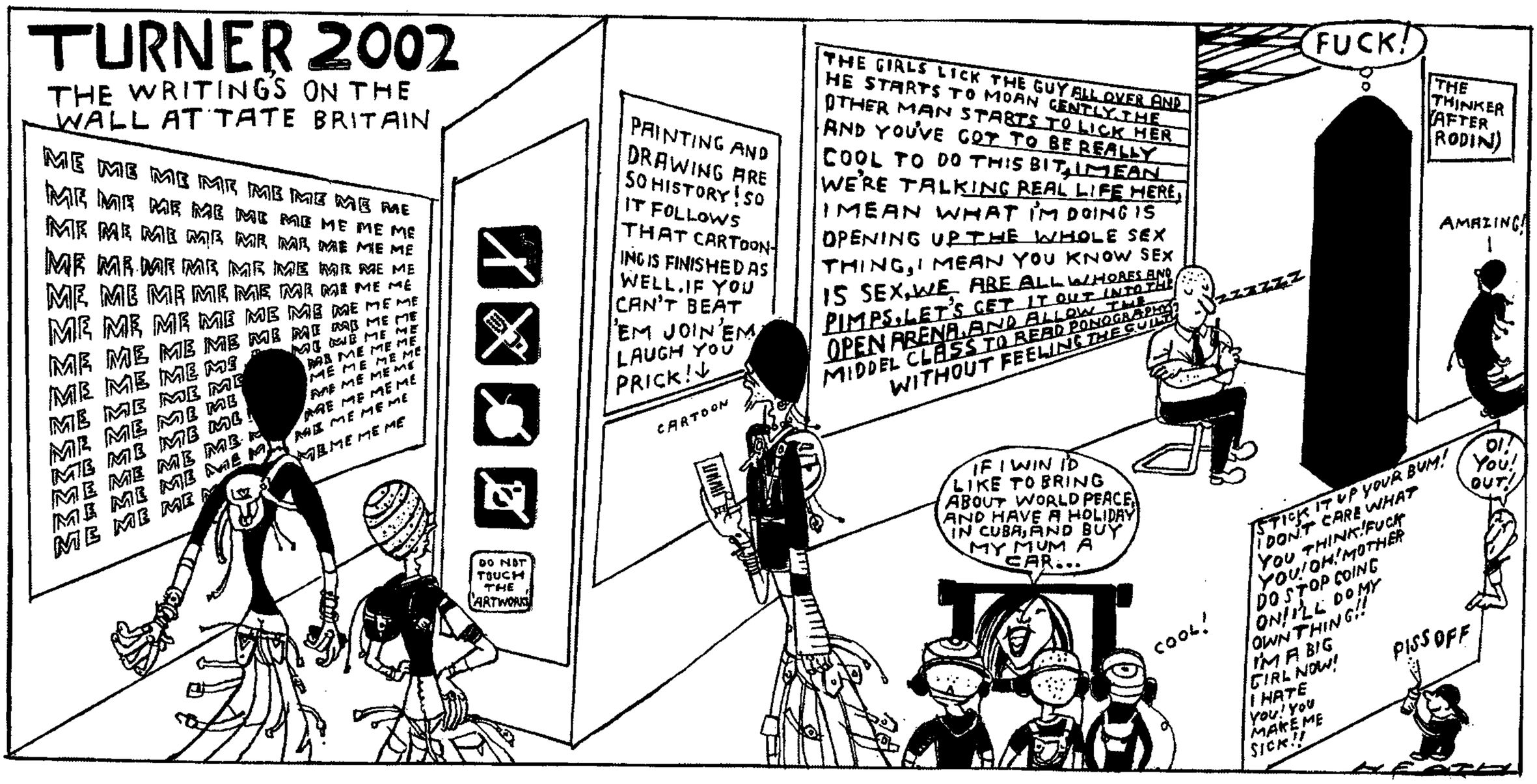
by Our Art Staff **Brian Arsewoman**

A PROMINENT modern artist was at the centre of a furious row last night after denouncing New Labour as "conceptual bullshit".

The artist pinned a note to the door of 10 Downing Street which read, "Your stuff is all just empty, meaningless concepts which are poorly executed with unimpressive results. A child of four could do better. If this is all Britain can produce then we are all in deep elephant dung."

The Tony Prize

A spokesman for Ten Modern (formerly "Number Ten Downing Street") said: "New Labour's work is designed to challenge people's assumptions that the government is capable of doing anything."


TURNER 2002
THE WRITINGS ON THE WALL AT TATE BRITAIN
ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME
ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME
ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME
ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME
ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME
ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME
ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME
ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME
ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME
ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME
ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME
ME ME ME ME ME ME ME ME
DO NOT TOUCH THE 'ARTWORKS'
PAINTING AND DRAWING ARE SO HISTORY! SO IT FOLLOWS THAT CARTOONING IS FINISHED AS WELL. IF YOU CAN'T BEAT 'EM JOIN 'EM LAUGH YOU PRICK!↓
CARTOON
THE GIRLS LICK THE GUY ALL OVER AND HE STARTS TO MOAN GENTLY. THE OTHER MAN STARTS TO LICK HER AND YOU'VE GOT TO BE REALLY COOL TO DO THIS BIT, I MEAN WE'RE TALKING REAL LIFE HERE, I MEAN WHAT I'M DOING IS OPENING UP THE WHOLE SEX THING, I MEAN YOU KNOW SEX IS SEX, WE ARE ALL WHORES AND PIMPS, LET'S GET IT OUT INTO THE OPEN ARENA, AND ALLOW THE MIDDEL CLASS TO READ PONOGRAPHY WITHOUT FEELING THE GUILT
IF I WIN ID LIKE TO BRING ABOUT WORLD PEACE, AND HAVE A HOLIDAY IN CUBA, AND BUY MY MUM A CAR...
COOL!
FUCK!
THE THINKER (AFTER RODIN)
AMAZING!
ZZZZZZ
STICK IT UP YOUR BUM! I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU THINK! FUCK YOU! OH! MOTHER DO STOP GOING ON! I'LL DO MY OWN THING!! I'M A BIG GIRL NOW! I HATE YOU! YOU MAKE ME SICK!!
OI! YOU! OUT!
PISS OFF

DIARY

HEATHER MILLS McCARTNEY

Using my special friends-and-family key, I let myself into Buckingham Palace and put my head round the Queen's sitting room door.

Elizabeth tells me she's been hurting dreadfully and has lost her sense of identity. "I'm, like, who am I?" she says. She always turns to me for comfort. She finds me very down to earth. "You're a very caring person, Heather," she says, "Probably too caring for your own good. When my time comes, I hope they'll make you Queen. It's what Diana would have wanted, and to replace me they'll need someone well known throughout the world for her tireless charity work".

I'm like, "I couldn't be Queen, that's not my style, I'm not up to it." But she gets me sat down and says, "You've spent your whole life caring for others, Heather. And it's time you got them to care for you. You'd fit this throne real beautiful – and what's more for all the love you've got inside you, you deserve it, love".

It wasn't always like this, you know. These days, people like the Queen are queuing up to see me, but when I was a child we were very very poor. It was like Steptoe and Son, we were that poor. Poorer. In fact, now you mention it I remember actually being brought up by Steptoe and Son, only they never showed me on the scenes they showed on the television, because the old man Steptoe locked me in a cupboard for the six years they were filming. Sometimes you could hear a bump and a yell, but that's the only sign the viewers ever had that I was in there.

Then they put me to work up the chimneys. I was a chimney sweep till the age of 11, going up the chimneys and coming down all like black and sooty. Luckily, I ran away from my wicked employer and leapt into a river, and luckily I was transformed into a water baby, where I met others in the same situation – and from them I learnt the meaning of love.

From there, aged sort of 13, I went to live in Elm Street, where the nightmare took place. I never trusted Freddy Krueger, there was just something about that way he used to kill people at random that I didn't like.

So I thought, no, I'm not having any of this, and I managed to save a helluva lot of kids from his clutches. I never told anyone that before, but that's one of the reasons I'm being considered for the Nobel Peace Prize this year, which is great.

Paul's been a lot happier since we got wed. He now says he couldn't of written some of his greatest songs, like *Yesterday* and *Satisfaction*, if it wasn't for me. *Martha My Dear* was about me, and so was *Mull of Kintyre*. Now I hear they're planning to call me the fifth Beatle, which is great, because of all my behind-the-scenes work, which I've never spoken of before now. Like, I don't want to overshadow all the work John Lennon put into the band, 'cos I've got a lot of respect for John, so let's just say a lot of the tunes were basically mine, and leave it at that, shall we?

I'd like to clear one thing up for good and proper, right. I get along with Paul's kids great, we're very, very close, in fact Stella calls me her angel, because I design all those clothes for her. By the way, the last time I saw Mother Teresa, like, she greeted me like a sister and she said she'd love me to design her a really beautiful evening frock, which was basically a great compliment coming from her.

One of the reasons Paul respects me is because before we got married I was obviously a whole lot more famous than he was – face it, I'd been a top model and international charity worker for ten years – and I made sure that I didn't push him into the spotlight, because that's like quite hard to handle if you're not used to it. So the papers were full of 'Heather Mills's New Guy' and 'Heather to Marry' and 'Who's the Lucky Man?' and all that stuff, but I never let it go to his head, which is great.

Sure, I've had my share of hardships. It wasn't much fun coming face to face on that dark, stormy night with the Loch Ness Monster armed only with a pencil and an elastic band, I can tell you. And the day I went up to Saddam Hussein, looked him straight in the face and said, "You've got to let some love into your world" – believe me, that took some nerve. By the way, after just ten minutes he asked me to marry him, begged me, just like every other guy, but I was married to Paul, right, and that's not the kind of person I am. But I sometimes think that if I'd said yes, perhaps there wouldn't be all this sort of tension in the world, which is a shame really.

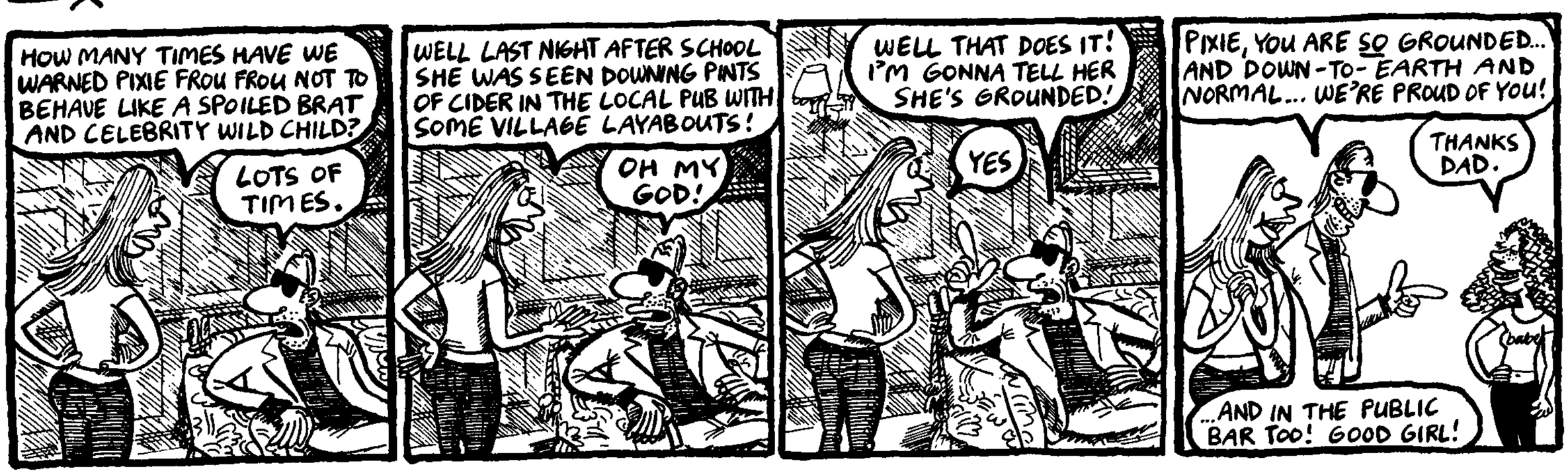
I don't usually talk about this but I was abducted by aliens aged 15 and a half and it wasn't at all pleasant really. It was when I was 14. I was just walking down the street one day, wondering how's I was going to earn enough money to pay for a great holiday at Disneyland for all the other poor kids in the world when this space ship came down and abducted me. And I was only 13 at the time. I'll never forgive my alien abductors the way they treated me – clean this, clean that, do this, do that, the lot. But when you suffer in life, you go one of two ways. You're either like, "I've been mentally and physically abused by aliens, I'm going to get really angry and abusive and get eaten up with it." Or you're like, "No, I'm going to make a difference, I'm going to put all the love I feel inside me into helping others less fortunate than myself and if that means becoming the world most famous international charity worker in the process then that's something I'll just have to come to terms with in my own way and if some people don't like that well they'll just have to lump it."

So now when people say to me, "Even with your seemingly unlimited capacity for caring, Heather, will you ever be able to forgive those aliens who abducted you when you were only 11?" I say, "They made me who I am today, and though I'll never voluntarily return to their flying saucer, and though I disapprove of many of their methods, I hope they'll come some day to understand what I wrote in that song all those years ago, like, 'All you need is love – love is all you need'." And you know something? I've taught Paul how to play that song, and now he accompanies me whenever I sing it. He's a great guy, and you know what? I'm determined to use my fame to bring him to the world's attention.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


HOW MANY TIMES HAVE WE WARNED PIXIE FROU FROU NOT TO BEHAVE LIKE A SPOILED BRAT AND CELEBRITY WILD CHILD?
LOTS OF TIMES.
WELL LAST NIGHT AFTER SCHOOL SHE WAS SEEN DOWNING PINTS OF CIDER IN THE LOCAL PUB WITH SOME VILLAGE LAYABOUTS!
OH MY GOD!
WELL THAT DOES IT! I'M GONNA TELL HER SHE'S GROUNDED!
YES
PIXIE, YOU ARE SO GROUNDED... AND DOWN-TO-EARTH AND NORMAL... WE'RE PROUD OF YOU!
THANKS DAD.
babe
...AND IN THE PUBLIC BAR TOO! GOOD GIRL!

Literary Review

Crashing symbols

The Little Friend
Donna Tartt
(Bloomsbury, £16.99)

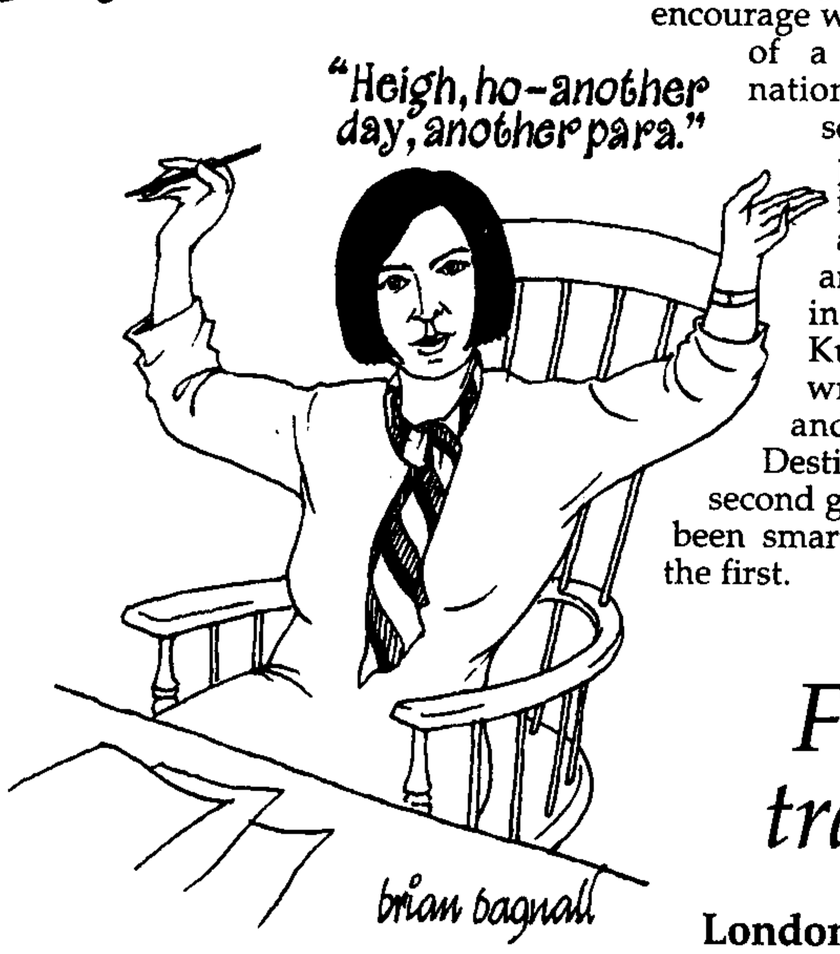
AS any bookseller will tell you, serious fiction just isn't selling at the moment. Even the Booker shortlisted titles didn't get their usual kick from the publicity and it's only what they call dick lit (Parsons, Hornby), clit lit (Fielding, Binchy) and thrillers (Rankin, Walters) which are really safe from the remainder shops now.

The main reason for the slump in demand for the arty stuff is that the Waterstone's and Borders shoppers have gone right off just-published fiction. Partly it's a 9/11 thing: made-up tales seem an indulgence when we could be reading *Inside The Taliban* or *The Truth About Saddam*. And the middle-class female arts grads – the main audience for serious fiction – have been diverted towards the backlist, buying instead late 90s paperbacks by De Bernieres, Faulks, Tyler and Allende for discussion at their book groups.

There's another problem too. Most of the novelists who do sell are what's known in the trade as habit-formers. This means they knock out one a year, with the new hardback coinciding with the previous autumn's release in paperback, so that the fiction has a chance to become addictive. Highbrow writers, though, like to take their time. Donna Tartt, for example, has waited an entire decade since *The Secret History*, her upmarket campus murder mystery, to publish *The Little Friend*. It's a dangerous delay because any faithful fan base she established may have given up waiting.

A novelist who takes that long is either a perfectionist or blocked and the reader of *The Little Friend* is fairly quickly certain that Tartt hasn't passed a decade making her prose impeccable. Divide time taken by pages finally published and this writer is finishing 50 pages a year or a page every six days.

Yet, despite the theoretical possibility of almost endless revision, few phrases suggest midnight oil and, in fact, many read like just-after-breakfast drafts. While prose



shaped by the thesaurus can be irritating, Tartt disappoints by using the nursery words – stood, said, walked – and often repeats these simplicities within the same paragraph or sentence. At one point, "sudden" and "suddenly" almost smash into each other.

Tartt's skill – here, as in her first book – is atmosphere. The feeling of the American South in the 70s is very well done: a stew of racism, nostalgia and suspicion. The author has read her Faulkner and Tennessee Williams as well as the detective fiction and children s books which her scholarly 12-year-old heroine, Harriet, consumes as she tries to catch the local she believes killed her brother eight years before.

Even so, perhaps because it so heavily rests on other literary texts, *The Little Friend* lacks the originality of *The Secret History*. Several American creative writing courses of the kind Tartt attended actually contain a lesson called Putting In The Symbols; and it's soon apparent that student Tartt was Phi Beta Kappa at that.

After the killing of the kid brother in the prologue, there's a dead cat in chapter one and a bird with its wing torn off in chapter two, carefully building up intimations of mortality, via an aunt suffering a stroke in the middle of the book, until the ground is ready for the climactic attempt at revenge. You feel in skilled hands during this build up but – as so often in American writing course fiction – you're all too conscious that your response is being shaped.

Although American colleges encourage writers to think in terms of a creative career, the nation's fiction contains some remarkable examples of writers who left it at one: J.D. Salinger and Harper Lee. There are also many – including Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut - who wrote one great book and then some others. Destined to belong to the second group, Tartt might have been smarter to place herself in the first.

Fallow travellers

London Orbital: A Walk around the M25
Iain Sinclair
(Granta, £25)

ONE of the saddest casualties of the post-modern tide in literature has been the travel book. In the old days, in the hands of, I don't know, an H.V. Morton or even a Paul Theroux, you knew where you were: the journey; the places; the sensations they evoked. The execution might range from the tweely sententious to the knowingly unimpressionable but at least the reader could work out what had been seen and the authorial emotions (or lack of them) knocked to the surface.

Catch any of our bright boys doing this kind of thing in the brisk new dawn of the twenty-first century! The travel-writer these days no longer sees and records, he essays, um, "psycho-geography", not so much exploring the landscape he fetches up in as mapping out the landscapes of the travelling mind, with enough interior baggage to sink a ship. It's the kind of thing Peter Ackroyd (a chum of Sinclair's) does, that J.G. Ballard (repeatedly name-checked here) is keen on, and is perhaps best summarised by the travelling companion who descants on something called "chorography", "place as expressively potent, place as experience, place as trigger to memory, imagination and mythic presence".

Well, no problem with any of those – but what does it mean on the page? Inevitably one doesn't do these excursions alone – nearly all the great literary travellers, from Don Quixote down, have sidekicks – and Sinclair sets out on his 120 mile stroll with a fine old collection of attendants. These include his old mate the artist Laurence "Renchi" Bicknell (responsible for the quotation above) Bill Drummond of pop pranksters the KLF and the footsore photographer Marc Atkins.

Equally, such promenades need an agenda, and Sinclair's declares itself from the first mention of the motorway's mid-80s unveiling: Mrs Thatcher was ghastly; "new" Labour is worse; the secret state is out to get you (Sinclair is a great one for conspiracy theories, and to be fair the stuff about rattling Geiger counters on the old MoD sites around Enfield looks terrifyingly plausible.) Any kind of urban regeneration is apparently a bad idea, the transmogrification of Hackney being rejected, so far as I could make out, on the grounds that if you smarten the place up the author and his band of post-60s anarcho-hippy friends won't have anywhere to go.

Anyway, slowly, ruminatively and with maximum digressions, the jaunt begins. What characterises it, or rather its reporting, is the usual high-grade wordiness, great windy descriptions that, on close inspection, turn out not to describe. In particular Sinclair makes dozens of attempts to render down his tarmacadamed subject – "the dull silvertop that acts as a prophylactic between driver and landscape", a "grim necklace", "this conceptual ha-ha", "a rage-inducing asteroid belt, debris bumping and farting and belching around a sealed-off city", "a security collar fixed to the neck of a convicted criminal" – not one of which actually conveys anything about the entity to hand.

In the end this top-of-the-range portentousness becomes the book's distinguishing mark. Thus on Bill Drummond, who once incinerated a million pounds on Jura as an art-statement: "Using bundles of banknotes as peat was a transgressive act that prefigured the grotesque barbecue of farm animals, the smoke plumes that marked out the north-east corner of the M25".

Or again, espying the *Big Brother* complex at Three Mills, "Celebrity is fear, testosterone, oestrogen, unease". The markings on motorways are "shamanic". Well of course they are! And no doubt Ernie the milkman jingling down to Waltham Abbey in his float is Boudicca in her chariot! Or something. As you may gather from the foregoing, *London Orbital* is full of interesting material but marred by the eternal fashionable mucking about in which no thought or observation can exist without its figurative gloss. Readers in search of a less laboured take on motorway sociology are directed to Edward Platt's excellent study of the A40, *Leadville* (Picador £7.99). As for Sinclair, the next time he steps out with Renchi, Bill, Mark and co, why not just look at what you see and tell us about it, eh?

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ PENGUIN has been showing it has no hard feelings over Rachel Polonsky's savaging in the *TLS* of *Natasha's Dance* by Orlando Figes, by taking out a full-page advertisement for the book.

The ad carries plaudits from Lisa Jardine ("Packed with illumination and insight") and John Bayley ("Masterly") among others, but there is no trace of the *TLS* review itself. Understandable, since Polonsky all but accused Figes of plagiarising from the American musicologist Richard Taruskin.

Figes is, however, finding it harder to be magnanimous. In the *Observer* Robert McCrum commented that "Figes has handled the sniping of academic colleagues with dignity" and that his response to the *TLS* was "a model of patient, authorial cool, containing enough lethal counter-thrusts to demonstrate that, while wounded, he was out of intensive care." Unfortunately, the original draft of Figes' letter was none of these things, the finished article having been rewritten considerably by a more rational friend, who remains anonymous.

■ IN ADDITION to the well-trodden rape allegations, Ulrika Jonsson's *Honest* carries details of another, rather more gentlemanly, anonymous, *inamorato*.

After splitting with the violent Stan Collymore, she enjoyed a brief romance with another soccer player. "We both wanted to keep it secret as it was early days," she explains. "And have decided to respect each other's privacy since. Because of this I will only call him 'the footballer'."

Fair enough. However, the book carries a photo of Ulrika "on location with my dear friend David Ginola, October 1999", despite omitting to mention this "dear friend" anywhere in her manuscript. Is this what we might call a clue... and has the *Daily Mail* something else to kick itself for failing to spot in its incomplete serialisation?

■ PUBLISHERS have always been fond of superlatives when it comes to the promotion of books, but it appears that HarperCollins has gone too far with its campaign for *Who Says Elephants Can't Dance* by Louis V Gerstner Jr.

An autobiography-cum-business manual, it tells how Gerstner rescued IBM from collapse. An impressive feat — but the volume is being billed in the publisher's broadsheet ads as "the most inspirational book you'll ever read". In its excitement/desperation to hype, has HarpicCollins, which has a large division devoted to the extremely lucrative production of Bibles, temporarily forgotten the more enduring claimants to that particular title?

'Bookworm'

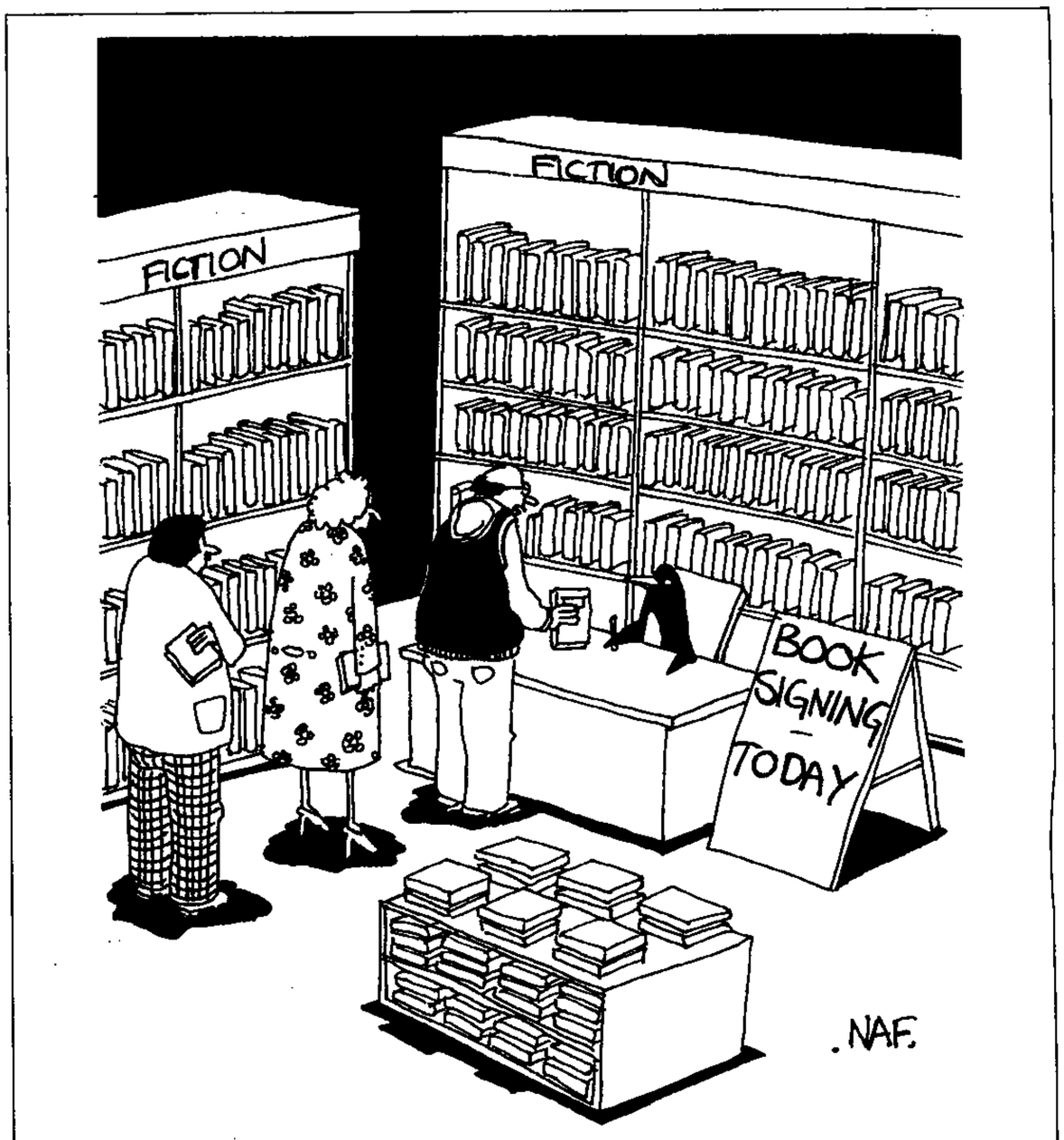
O·B·N

"I know of no other writer who has the same star quality about her," says Clare Alexander, her former publisher at Viking Penguin. "She [Donna Tartt] really is enigmatically starry, in the way that I guess Garbo was, which is very disorientating for us bookish types. We're not used to someone like Donna, who is so fascinating, so self-possessed and yet so incredibly unpredictable... she is just so stylish, this clever little woman who makes everyone around her look like a stumbling giant."

Metro Life Magazine

(Submitted by K. Shift)

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.



"Can I ask why all your books are set in the Antarctic?"

WHAT YOU DIDN'T MISS Pt 94

John Betjeman – New Fame New Love
Bevis Hillier
(John Murray, £25)

■ In 1938 John became an occasional book reviewer for the small circulation literary magazine *New Signals*, then edited from offices above a shoe shop in Marylebone Lane off Wigmore Street by Reginald Turgis whose aunt Sybil had been at school at High Wycombe with Penelope's uncle Humphrey Chetwode. Turgis had studied oriental languages at the University of Limoges where a fellow student had been a Henley neighbour of Osbert Lancaster, Basil Threepwood.

Turgis was then a middle-aged man with glasses and a slight stammer who relied heavily on his formidable deputy Denis Brimelow, author of a definitive study of the work of Rabindranath Tagore. Brimelow's secretary Jessica Mimms (now 97) remembers: "Denis was a difficult man to work with as he suffered from sleeping sickness and would quite often fall asleep in the middle of a sentence. I don't think Mr Turgis..."
(Cont. p. 94)

Pseuds Corner

We need a shift in public understanding away from the old model of teaching as the transmission of facts and figures towards one which captures teachers' role as expert practitioners in advanced pedagogy.

ESTELLE MORRIS quoted in
Daily Telegraph

Terrorism is cosmic injustice speeded up and turned into an act of conscious will.

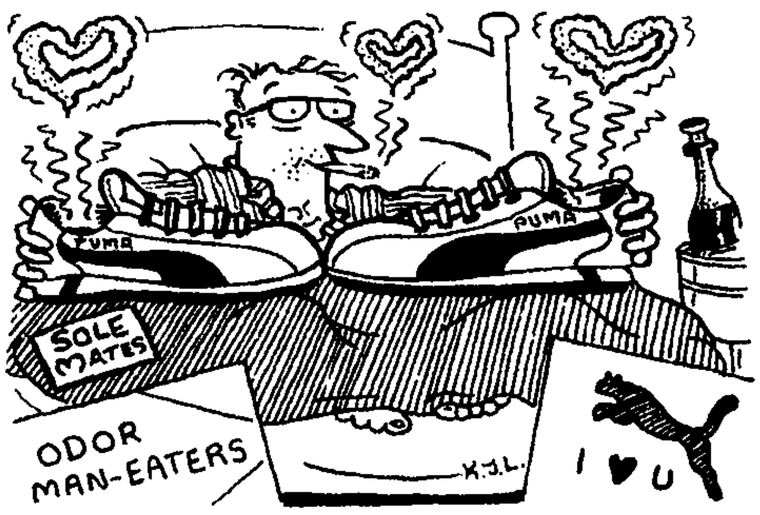
JANET DALEY
Daily Telegraph

Oh, I would love children. I don't entirely rule the possibility out. When I'm 58 I might go to Bolivia and marry a South American Indian and have nine children if only for the astonishment it would cause among my friends. I should like half-caste children, partly for aesthetic reasons, partly because it strengthens the human race.

MATTHEW PARRIS
Sunday Telegraph Magazine

To anyone with the merest grasp of philosophy, the white suit is nothing but the *tabula rasa* of John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.*

PROFESSOR GIDEON CARTER
Sunday Times Style Section



According to [Tony] Bertone, this is a trainer that has a personality, a soul. It comes with a photograph of the shirt, leather boots and old pajama top that went into producing it. It comes with its own history. And every owner will be given a password to a website where they can register their particular pair of trainers, chat to other owners and become part of the Thrift community. Puma wants people to form an emotional bond with their trainers.

TONY BERTONE, Puma's global director of brand management, on the 'Top winner Thrift trainer (retail price £170),
Observer Magazine

Pseuds Corporate

We continually exist to synergistically supply value-added deliverables such that we may continue to proactively maintain enterprise-wide data to stay competitive in tomorrow's world.

Slogan at foot of Microsoft hotmail message

City of Nottingham Council, Department of Leisure and Community Services
Creative Room Energiser
This is a role for an innovative practitioner and strategic thinker experienced in multi-agency working, with the skills to deliver urban/contemporary arts activities and events across the city and a good understanding of both social action and youth work theory. You will integrate the project with city-wide and departmental art strategies whilst developing a multi-agency steering group and a network of link workers.

Advertisement, *Guardian*

CONTRIBUTORS: Hugh Alexander, Neil Weatherall, L. Gretton, Elaine Darkin, Mrs D.M. Winard, Mark Papp, Claire Cowley.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

THE WILMSLOW BOYS

ONE of the year's many great football mysteries was the sudden departure in January of John Gregory, the manager of Aston Villa and a man not known for his amazing dynamism.

The club was then seventh in the premier league and had just won its last two games. Gregory had complained publicly about the lack of spending money for transfers, yet during his time as manager he had spent as much as £71.5m in transfers and recouped £46m.

Many of these transfers had been made through a single, highly profitable agency – Proactive Sports Management, based in Wilmslow, Cheshire, which represents 262 professional footballers. How many Aston Villa transfers did Proactive handle? The *Eye*'s informants suggest that as many as 33 out of 36 transfers to and from the club in Gregory's time were made through Proactive.

Always on the ball: Paul Stretford (left) and John Gregory

Since Proactive can take as much as 5 percent from each deal, it obviously made a lot of money from the transfers. This is all rather relevant since the boss of Proactive, Paul Stretford, is a close personal friend of John Gregory and represents him in his moves from club to club. When Gregory moved from Villa to another, much more lowly, premier league club, Derby County (since relegated), Paul Stretford's jovial picture appeared next to his friend and client.

Naïve observers of the football scene might imagine it was easy to find out how many transfers to and from Villa were made through Proactive. But it wasn't.

The *Eye* contacted the man who answers press inquires for Aston Villa – a former ITV journalist – who was quite sure he could let us have the information. Quite a long time later, he emailed with the surprising news that the information was "not available". He explained: "As a club we regard the representation of players during transfers as a confidential matter. This is a private issue and therefore we are not at liberty to divulge such information. I can only suggest that you make an approach directly to Proactive Sports Management."

What a helpful tip. The *Eye* asked Proactive's official spokeswoman for "a list of transfers to and from the club over the last two years that were handled by Proactive". The *Eye* also asked "whether anyone at Proactive has made (or would like to make) any comment about any possible conflict of interest between representing the manager at a club and at the same time taking fees from transfers to and from the club."

Back came the prompt reply: "Proactive Sports Group PLC's policy is to make no comment on such matters. Suffice to say that all the group representatives operate under the policy guidelines and regulations applying to agents." What use are such guidelines and regulations, however, if they allow rich and powerful agents not even to disclose basic facts about their activities on behalf of the household names in British football?

PS: Among the more questionable transfers in Gregory's time was that of Bosko Balaban, who came to Aston Villa from Dynamo Zagreb in August 2001 for £5.8m. He played just eight league matches for Villa (£725,000 a match) and has gone back on loan to Zagreb.

PPS: When Proactive was floated on the stock exchange last year, several prominent football managers, including Bobby Robson (Newcastle United), Kevin Keegan (Manchester City) and Graeme Souness (Blackburn Rovers) bought shares in the firm.

BUNCH OF OLD BARTS

ONE of the companies bidding for the massive private finance initiative (PFI) deal at Barts hospital has no fewer than six former Barts directors on its payroll.

Health Care Projects Ltd (HCP Ltd) manages one of the two bids for the £500m scheme, the biggest public private partnership in the NHS. HCP was founded by Gerry Green, who up until 1997 was chief executive at Barts. According to HCP, while working for the NHS Green "led the proposal to develop the Royal London Hospital, the most extensive hospital scheme in the PFI programme" – the very scheme for which he is now bidding.

When Green left Barts in 1997 he was replaced by Ray Pett, who was chief executive of the Royal London NHS Trust until 2000. Pett is also now a director of HCP Ltd. And as the firm says: "As director of capital developments at the Royal Hospitals from 1996 to 1997, Ray orchestrated the PFI scheme to combine Barts, the London Chest Hospital, The Royal London Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Children's Hospital upon a single site in Whitechapel." Yup – the very scheme his firm is now bidding to win.

For good measure the chairman of HCP Ltd is Sir Derek Boorman, who from 1993 to 1997 chaired the Barts NHS Trust. Jackie Cardiff, director of operations at Barts until January 2001, is also an HCP Ltd employee.

Barts tells the *Eye* that "the trust and consortium have agreed that no one who has been employed by the trust within the past two years will be involved in their bidding team, either now or in the future. This rules out any involvement by Ray Pett and Jackie Cardiff. It is not the intention of HCP or the consortium that Gerry Green be involved directly in the bid." So that's all right, then.

Incredibly HCP Ltd also had two serving Barts directors on its payroll. In July a Barts NHS Trust board heard that two senior Barts employees were also working part time for HCP Ltd. Barts director of facilities Peter Holden, who retired in August, and still-serving deputy director of facilities Barry Clarke were both carrying out freelance "consultancy" for HCP Ltd.

While former Barts staff are doing well from the PFI, current employees aren't so lucky. Phil Billows, branch secretary of health workers' union Unison at Barts, has been suspended because he campaigned against the PFI scheme.

MMR: THE DANISH LINK

LAST week another study on the safety of the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine found no link between the triple jab and the onset of autism.

The Danish study looked at the medical records of more than 500,000 children and, comparing vaccinated with unvaccinated children, found that MMR-jabbed children were no more likely to develop autism than those who had not had the vaccine.

Researchers reporting in the *New England Journal of Medicine* examined the records of the 537,303 children born in Denmark between January 1991 and December 1998. They found similar rates of autism among the 82 percent, or 440,655, who had been given the triple vaccine at about 17 months as among those who had not been given it. And they reported no sudden surge after the introduction of the jab.

The team from the Danish Epidemiology Science Centre in Aarhus concludes that "this study provides strong evidence against the hypothesis that MMR vaccination causes autism". The size and design make this study much better than all the previous ones that have been cited to dismiss any link. Indeed, the authors themselves dismiss the other studies as "weak and based on case-series, cross-sectional and ecologic studies". However, there are still serious issues with this paper that limit the conclusions that can be drawn from it.

Fundamentally it does not distinguish between those children who regressed into autism and lost existing skills – ie the children at the centre of the vaccine claims — and those more classically autistic children who never developed the skills in the first place.

The decision to register as autistic children who met only two strict diagnosis criteria could have meant many affected children would have been excluded. (Indeed, the autism rate identified in the study was roughly one in 600 children — well below the one in 200 rate now accepted in many European countries and the US.)

In addition, an MMR-autism scare in Denmark well before any worries were voiced in this country, meant that many of those families who shunned the jab may have done so because there was already autism in the family.

What the study clearly shows is that MMR is not the cause of *all* autism. But no one has ever suggested it was: only that it might be linked to the rarer, regressive form of autism and associated bowel disease.

There are still a small but significant number of children who have regressed into autism and who have now been found to have persistent vaccine-strain measles infection either in the diseased bowel or in their blood — and in two documented cases in the brain. And that needs an explanation.

Elizabeth Birt, founder of Medical Interventions for Autism, a charity now supporting the work in the United States of Andrew Wakefield, the exiled gastroenterologist who first raised the possibility of a link, said: "The study participants were selected from psychiatric clinics and hospitals; no child was evaluated for immune system dysfunction, inflammatory bowel disease or the presence of measles RNA in their blood, intestines and cerebral spinal fluid.

"It is time that we start looking for the biological basis of this disorder which has been well documented in US and UK children and stop using epidemiology to declare 'no relationship' when study after study fails to be designed to even look at this issue."

FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...

■ **NICHOLAS HOOGSTRATEN:** A big sigh of relief echoed round the home counties when the fascist millionaire and thug Nicholas Hoogstraten was convicted and jailed for ten years for his role in the killing by others of a business associate.

Several people in West Sussex have contacted the *Eye* with their complaints to local police about Hoogstraten's activities and the surprising failure of West Sussex police to do anything about them. They point out that Hoogstraten's conviction followed an investigation by the Metropolitan police, not the West Sussex plods.

One interesting reference to Hoogstraten appeared in a case with which *Eye* readers are familiar. In 1980 the body of local antique dealer Jonathan Lewis was found dead in the river Arun. His best friend, Colin Wallace, Arun district council press officer and former army information officer in Northern Ireland, was eventually charged with his murder and convicted of manslaughter in 1981.

Wallace consistently denied any involvement in Lewis's death. One feature of the trial was the evidence of Amanda Metcalfe who said she had seen Lewis on the night he died in an Arundel pub called the Golden Goose with a man (not Wallace) she had not seen before. She was very certain about the date, and the judge observed that if she was right about the sighting Wallace could not be convicted.

Among the undisclosed messages received by police after Lewis's death was publicised was an anonymous one stating that Lewis, who had a warehouse in Hove, worked occasionally for Hoogstraten. Wallace's conviction was quashed in 1996 and the investigation into Lewis's death was not reopened.

■ **INLAND REVENUE:** Nick Davies of the *Guardian* has been publishing a series of devastating articles on the Inland Revenue. His basic charge, familiar to *Eye* readers, is that the Revenue applies different standards (it takes less tax, for instance, and applies softer punishments for evaders) to multinational companies than to individuals.

On 17 October he wrote yet another powerful article in which he estimated that the Revenue's lax approach to corporate taxpayers was losing schools and hospitals £20bn a year, and demanded that the Revenue and its chairman Nick Montagu stop sniping at him and instead produce some facts to justify the Revenue's position.

Montagu responded promptly, not in public but on the Revenue's confidential internal website. "For the record," his message went, "the *Guardian* (17 October) carries an article which contains a number of unsupported slurs on the Department and its staff. The Board will be considering how best to respond." Three weeks later, no response.

Meanwhile on 26 October the *Financial Times* published an article quoting Mr Jason Butler, a partner at a firm called Bloomsbury Financial Planning that helps corporate clients with their tax problems. "Mr Butler", it stated, "believes the key to good service is to have people who have specialist knowledge and are available for customer contact. 'The Inland Revenue have pleasantly surprised me,' he says. 'They have moved staff to specialist units dealing with for example domicile and capital gains tax units – these people have technical knowledge that is not available in local branches and I would say it takes us around 35 percent less time to fill in our clients' complicated tax forms.' "

The *Eye*'s experiences in these matters, chiefly derived from our inquires into the Mapeley tax haven scandal (see recent *Eyes*), is that there are scores of ordinary tax inspectors in the Revenue who know perfectly well that Nick Davies's allegations are entirely true, and that the half-hearted denials so far issued by Montagu and Co are so much rubbish.

BARRON'S FRAUGHT

MANY millions of pounds have been spent on the Bloody Sunday inquiry into what happened in Londonderry on 30 January 1972 when 13 people died. Rather less effort has gone into inquiries about the terrorist bombings in Dublin and Monaghan in May 1974 which killed 33 people.

No one has been accused let alone convicted of these attrocities. But we do know that within 72 hours of the bombs going off, both the Gardai and Royal Ulster Constabulary had drawn up almost identical lists of suspects. Nevertheless, no arrest was ever made. An organisation inspired by the families of those killed – Justice for The Forgotten – strove for years to get at the truth and at last, in 1999, the Irish government set up an official inquiry, now chaired by a judge, Henry Barron.

Two media investigations into the bombings have been closely scrutinised by the inquiry. The first is an article in the *Sunday Business Post* on 11 July 1993 by Lt Col John Morgan, former head of security and military intelligence at army HQ in Dublin. Morgan wrote that he had retired from the army in 1986 and had started his own inquiries into the Dublin/Monaghan bombings in 1987.

He went on: "Within a year I had come to definite conclusions. In broad outline these were that the bombings were conducted under the aegis of British intelligence members in Northern Ireland, that the military planning for them was done by an officer in the British Army and that British Special Forces operatives were involved." He had, he wrote, initially believed that MI6 was responsible but later took the view that the organisation chiefly responsible was MI5.

The second media item that interested the Barron inquiry was a programme broadcast simultaneously by Yorkshire Television's First Tuesday team. The theme of this programme was summarised in *Eye* 824 – "that the British army and security services were up to their necks in the worst terrorist atrocity since the war".

A third piece of evidence about the bombings is an affidavit signed in 1999 by a former police sergeant in Northern Ireland, John Weir, who was himself convicted of the sectarian murder of a Catholic chemist. Weir disclosed that the bombings were the work of loyalist paramilitaries whose equipment and intelligence were provided by the army and the police. These revelations fitted closely with other evidence – notably the power and force of the explosives used, the facts about where they came from and where they had

been stored, and the political priorities of the army and the intelligence services at that time.

The central aim of the Protestant ultras at that time was to destabilise the political situation in the north and wreck the power-sharing executive set up by the British Tory government in 1973. This destabilisation was the purpose of the Ulster Workers Council strike (which started three days before the Dublin bombings). The effect of the destabilisation of the political situation by the strike and the bombings became quite clear when, at the end of May 1974, the power-sharing executive of Northern Ireland was disbanded by the British government.

Naturally lawyers for the bereaved families and the Barron inquiry are anxious to probe these allegations. Successive politicians at the Northern Ireland office, first minister of state Adam Ingram and then secretary of state John Reid, were asked to provide relevant documents about the investigation. Some security files were finally handed over in March 2002, two years after the first request for cooperation had been made. Information in them was sketchy so the lawyers asked for more documents.

Eventually the families' lawyers decided to take matters into their own hands. They wrote to the homes of a number of people who at the time were employed by the British army and MI5, asking for information about the work of their units at the time of the bombings. These letters caused a furore in the ministry of defence, whose home secretariat – the department responsible for sensitive political issues – wrote back to the lawyers. This letter went by second-class post, was addressed in a child-like handwriting and signed by an indecipherable squiggle. It concluded: "The individuals that you have contacted have been advised not to provide a personal response to your request."

The *Eye* asked the MoD several questions about this letter. The MoD explained, to our surprise, that all its letters go by second-class post. On the question of the identity of the author and how many MoD employees past or present he/she purported to be representing, the ministry refused to answer.

WATT A CARRY-ON!

YET another whistleblower inside the European court of auditors has made accusations of nepotism and corruption.

The court, which comprises one member from each country in the European Union (EU), is the main watchdog overseeing the finances of the European commission. But only one member of the court is an accountant. The others are mainly former civil service mandarins and politicians.

The new claims complement almost exactly the original allegations of a British official at the court, Dougal Watt (see *Eye* 1065). Mr Watt also made charges of nepotism and corruption, naming those he considered responsible. When the court refused properly to investigate his allegations, he enlarged them, outlining his doubts about the official story of the strange death of Antonio Quatraro, former head of the commission's notorious tobacco unit, who died in 1993 after falling in very mysterious circumstances from a high building in Brussels. Since making these allegations, Mr Watt has been ill and has not returned to work. He is still living in his native Scotland.

The respected Europhile publication *European Voice* reported on 23 October that OLAF, Europe's anti-fraud organisation, is "finalising a probe" into Mrs Kalliopi Nikolaou, who left the court of auditors last year after five years representing Greece there. The charges are based on the whistleblower's allegations that Mrs Nikolaou helped a colleague alter papers to secure substantial holiday pay and hired family and friends without qualifications.

The allegations and charges fit almost exactly what Mr Watt said publicly several times earlier this year. He believes, however, that Mrs Nikolaou has been made a scapegoat by the court and by OLAF. Her (relatively minor) nepotism could not have taken place without the active participation of senior officials and the passive acceptance of other members of the court.

The *Eye* understands that the whistleblower who denounced her also provided evidence implicating several other members of the court. Mr Watt regards the charges as a total vindication of what he did. He has not been impressed by the reaction of the court, which has cut off his salary. He plans to return soon to Europe where he believes he will be sacked. He is surprised by the almost total lack of publicity for his story, which has been taken up by only one British newspaper, the Glasgow-based *Herald*. He quotes the late Kenneth Williams: "Infamy, infamy, they've all got it in for me."

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

THE threatened bid for struggling Thistle Hotels looks certain to develop into a down and dirty battle given the background and the personalities involved.

Would-be Jersey bidder Orb Estates is already in legal dispute with Thistle over payment for the majority of the group's hotels bought in March for £600m. Orb is also involved in a messy row for control of dot-com survivor and cash shell Izodia, which has already attracted the notice of the takeover panel.

Cynics might suggest that the common link between Thistle and Izodia is that both are sitting on large piles of cash which can certainly make a bid not only attractive but cheap. Izodia has £33m – worth 52p a share against an indicated offer of 59p from Orb which only has to obtain a further 25 percent for control. Thistle is valued at around £630m but has £360m in cash – mostly from Orb's purchase of its hotels. Hotels that it has since tried to sell on to… Izodia.

All of which makes those behind Orb very interesting; and none is perhaps more interesting than Turkish Cypriot Salahi Ozturk, the 65-year-old business partner of Irish accountant Sam Nolan. Between them they control Orb.

Ozturk is better known in Asil Nadir's homeland of Northern Cyprus. He became successful in the Turkish-controlled enclave before branching out in Britain and Turkey where he was involved with casinos – a high-risk business because of the problems from Turkish organised crime.

In Britain he first attracted attention in the property boom of the late 80s where he surfaced in Barbican Holdings before it went into receivership. That was also where his path crossed with Gerald Smith, the pension thief jailed for two years in 1993 for stealing from Farr Construction, who acts as a consultant to Orb. Smith also featured in a 1994 report by the Department of Timidity & Inaction into the reign of his friend Tony Cole at Bestwood. Smith was accused by the DTI inspectors of acting improperly in trying to rescue Cole, who also went to jail. None of this has persuaded Ozturk and Nolan to stay well away from Dr Gerald.

Barbican bought a parcel of properties from a Smith owned company in 1988. A year later Barbican bought into companies run by property developer Ron Popely who became chairman. Racehorse owner Popely became the subject of a DTI investigation leading to the 1999 collapse of his Hever Worldwide Properties timeshare group. Among these properties was a small resort on the south coast of Northern Cyprus.

Barbican director Ozturk also popped up in another Smith-linked company – Amalgamated Financial Investments. AFI bought a big stake in Barbican. Ozturk repaid the favour. By 1990 he was the major shareholder in AFI and a year before helped defeat a bid by rebel shareholders to unseat the board. One of the rebels' criticisms was the decision to buy 90 acres in Northern Cyprus from Ozturk in 1988 shortly after AFI invested in Barbican. The land produced no income and was said to be difficult to value. Title is a problem in the Turkish-Cypriot enclave as much of the land there was owned by Greek Cypriots before the Turkish invasion in 1974.

Following the demise of Barbican in 1993 Ozturk appears to have busied himself in Central Asia which was opening up, especially to Turkish businessmen, after the collapse of the Soviet

"Marcus is something in the City – the something is sacked"

Union. The oil wealth of Kazakhstan attracted his interest and this resulted in his return to the London stock market, this time with another Orb figure, entrepreneurial accountant Peter Catto.

In 1996 Catto took over property play Wedderburn Securities. During 1997 Wedderburn acquired oil exploration, production and trading interests in the Kazak republic mostly from Ozturk. First it acquired Geneva-based oil trader Tempo Trade for £5.2m in shares. Then it bought a Cypriot company, Forspur Trading, which had interests in Kazak oil fields. Finally it purchased Anglo Caspian Oil – which had a joint venture oil field in Kazakhstan and an exploration licence – for more than £4.5m. These interests were increased in 1998 when the now renamed Atlantic Caspian Resources acquired shares in East Caspian Oil, controlled by clients of Lynch Talbot, the Jersey fund manager run by Nolan. At the same time Ozturk, already a major shareholder, increased his stake through his company Marmara Resources, paying $2.8m for more shares.

He and Nolan effectively controlled Atlantic Caspian. But it has not been a good investment. Ozturk and friends took shares in 1997 at 40p. The price never went above 25p during its short 1998 heyday. Ozturk later took other shares at around 11p. The price is now less than a penny.

Ironically a similar fate has befallen two Caspian region oil plays with which Nadir has been associated very much behind the scenes. Caspian Energy and Puma Energy, both listed on the NASDAQ pink sheets, went from dollars in 1998-99 to pennies now.

With such a background of success it will not be surprising if Thistle directors and shareholders resist attempts by Orb to either obtain board representation or make a cut-price bid for the company.

ELSEWHERE in Jersey considerable interest was stirred in the septic isle as a result of the paragraph in the last issue reporting rumours of a link between a local "leading politician" and a building company "suspected of connections with the IRA".

Despite it being made clear that there was no evidence that the rumours were true, nevertheless both an unnamed politico and an unidentified company felt moved to immediately identify themselves as the victims of these unjustified suggestions.

First lawyers for Dandara Jersey, part of the Isle of Man-based Dandara Holdings group, wrote to the *Eye* saying that Dandara Jersey "surmises that the reference may be to them" and denying "any impropriety in its actions or funding". Furthermore it made the remarkable offer of opening its books and records to inspection to prove "the complete propriety of its ownership, funding and operation". *Private Eye* intends to accept this offer.

Two days later Senator Frank Walker, Jersey's defacto chancellor as chairman of its influential finance and economics committee, used the front page of his own newspaper, the *Jersey Evening Post*, to denounce *Private Eye* while declaring that it was "pretty obvious" that he was the "leading politician" mentioned but not named. Walker emphatically denied there was any truth in the rumours.

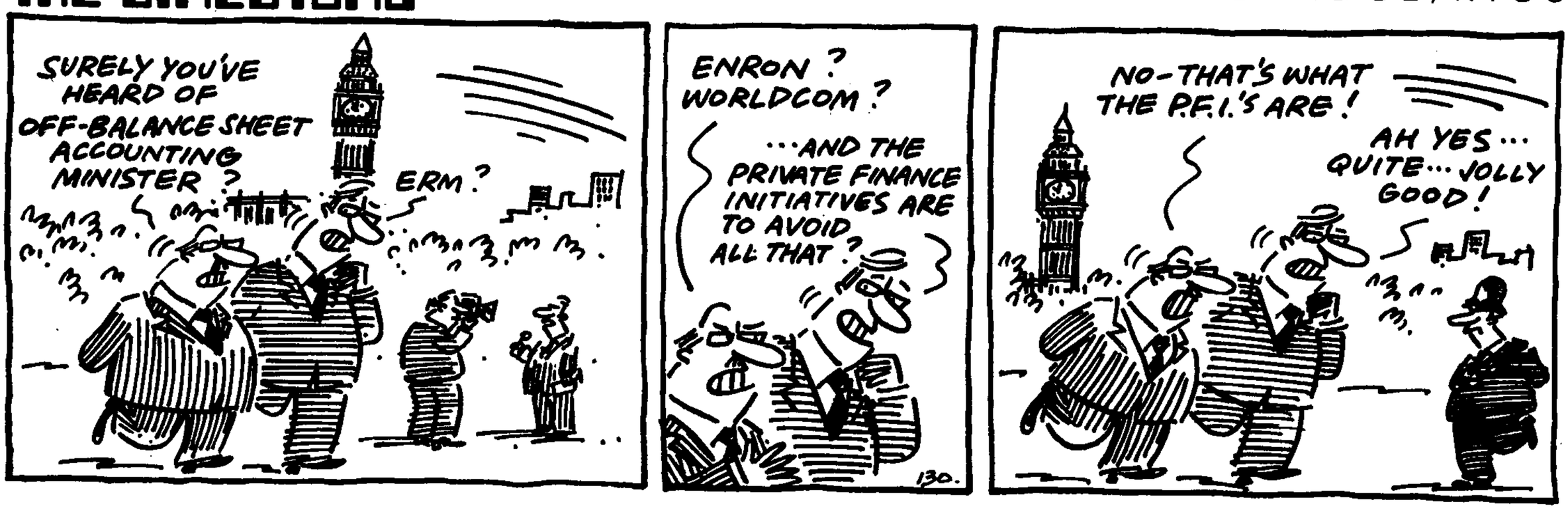
Which is exactly what the *Eye* said in the first place. So why did both Dandara and Walker want to identify themselves and thereby satisfy those who spread these baseless rumours?

IS former Tory treasurer and City bad guy Michael Ashcroft, currently preoccupied with dodging a Tyco bullet from enraged shareholders or even US prosecutors, also looking to give up his UK tax resident status now that he has his peerage?

Rumours in the property world suggest his Westminster mansion may be discreetly on the market. Ashcroft bought it through one of his many offshore companies five years ago for £1.7m and then spent much money on refurbishing it to a suitable standard. He moved in two years later – a helpful move come the deal whereby he agreed to assume UK resident tax status in order to obtain the delayed peerage promised by the grateful then Tory leader William Hague. Ashcroft is expected to have only ever been resident for income received here. His worldwide income is believed to have always been sheltered from the Inland Revenue either through trusts or a change in domicile. But with the peerage pocketed, Hague out and the treasurer's job handed over, perhaps it's time to return to the non-resident status Ashcroft enjoyed from the 80s with bases in tax

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG

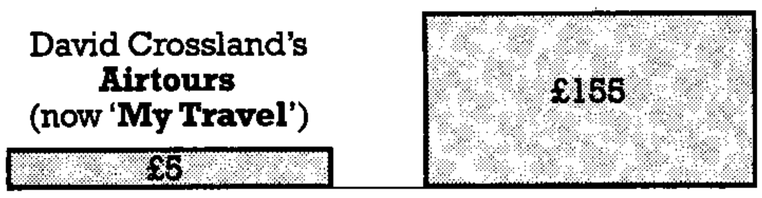

SURELY YOU'VE HEARD OF OFF-BALANCE SHEET ACCOUNTING MINISTER?
ERM?
ENRON? WORLDCOM?
…AND THE PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVES ARE TO AVOID ALL THAT?
130.
NO-THAT'S WHAT THE P.F.I.'S ARE!
AH YES… QUITE… JOLLY GOOD!

Stock Horror

by 'Bruin'

Airtours: pass the sick bag

Value of £100 invested ten years ago in...



havens like Bermuda and Belize. Or is it just that, ever the dealmaker, Ashcroft figures now is a good time to sell, especially as the anticipated profit would be tax free?

THE bearded wonder Richard Branson is talking up a flotation next year for his Australian budget airline Virgin Blue while omitting to mention that any share sale will presumably result in a cash injection for his empire, something it always needs.

Meanwhile Branson has quietly wound up one of the key participants in the 2000 rescue from the Our Price shop chain debacle. Ivanco(No.2), a Jersey-run company, acquired the £176m bank debt of VOP Holdings which it then either wrote off or converted into shares. Ivanco(No2) never produced accounts to show how it financed that deal or what happened subsequently. Instead it was wound up in August. Its assets consisted by then of shares in Virgin Retail Holdings and a £4.6m loan to another Virgin company, New Start Investments, formed days before Ivanco went into members' voluntary liquidation. It owed £5.8m to Virgin Management on which there was a small surplus of assets. Another opaque part of the Branson puzzle.

HOW amusing – but not if you're an investor – to see brokers Collins Stewart run by former analyst hero Terry Smith, hammer of the secretive or the dissembling, starring in the ever-widening split capital investment trust scandal.

Collins Stewart raised more than £3bn from investors for 23 trusts of which five have failed and another five are struggling. Smith insists their prospectuses carried enough information and risk warnings. Investors disagree. But it still suggests the Collins Stewart sage may have to be more careful about what and whom he criticises.

AS USUAL the DTI is living down to its reputation with its failure to act over the Imperial Consolidated collapse. Its jurisdiction argument is that all the victims are abroad – mainly Japanese or expats in Spain and the Gulf – even if the company was run from London. A short-cut would be to prosecute founders Lincoln Fraser and Jared Brook for being involved in the management of the company while disqualified as directors. But as ever, the DTI (surprise, surprise) is slow to act.

Meanwhile Fraser and Brook, through barely veiled intermediaries, are seeking to overturn the administration order which pushed them out of Imperial. The plan is to persuade IC investors to switch into their Property International fund. The IC fund votes could then be used to first replace the administrator in Grenada, where the funds are registered, and then use the voting power of the Grenadian companies, the major creditors of the UK companies, to replace administrator Philip Lyon.

Property International – its only named asset is unreassuringly a granite mine in Sierra Leone – is said to be looking to switch $150m of the S330m invested in the IC funds. Set up after Imperial closed, there is no evidence that it is anything more than a shell designed to obtain more money from Fraser and Brook's victims who have to hand over $2,500 as well as their fund shares.

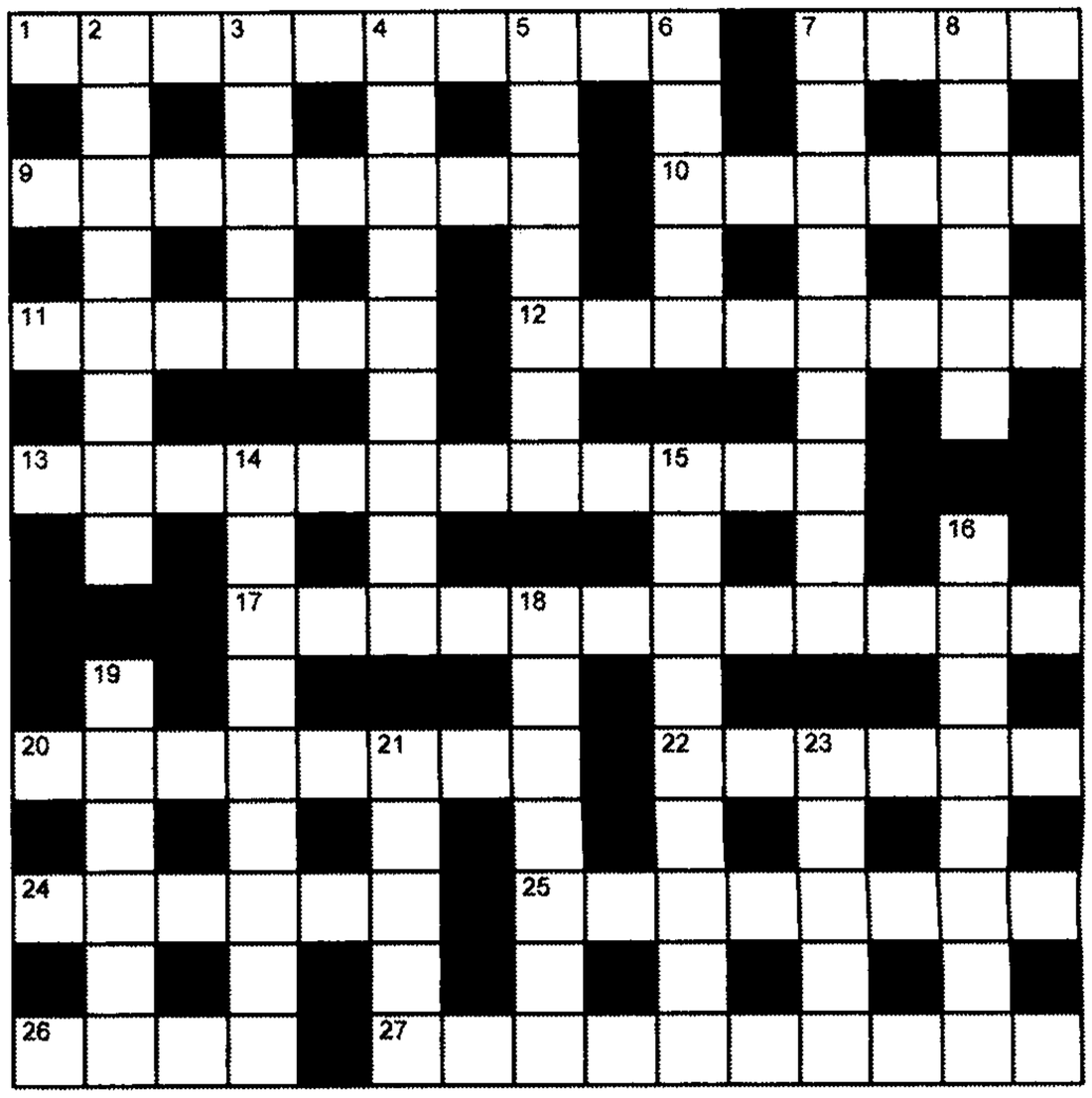
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 222

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 22 November 2002.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1 Tom and Roger's digital number/cruncher (10)
7 Bush's lot split by backing of violators of its air space? (4)
9 It's hard swapping political allegiance during voting (8)
10 Be a turn-on: when getting leg over, it's explosive (6)
11 Whose leader is put in, squeezed up and given a big head (6)
12 A final stiff one sported in bed (8)
13/26 Garish 1940s film that bores you sick? (12,4)
17 Satisfactory performer only on having a stiff one? (12)
20 Very average mark for screw – it might have you bawling (3,5)
22 President is about to get into flipping conflict – not a subtle tool (6)
24 Bishop is OK about getting hard on, though it spells utter ruin (6)
25 Southern Norwegian's ready to pierce impressive organ's carbuncles (8)
26 See 13
27 Naff, but Hirst's involved with small group in city (10)

DOWN

2 She's pisspoor, stupidly cruel at heart, Labour performer (8)
3 Flipped over dirty film entered by Universal: *Bodily Fluid* (5)
4 Inflict pain on yourself, as balls-up by one, IDS, shaky leader of Conservatives (4,1,4)
5 Come across as a row with Tony's Nos. 1 and 2 (3,4)
6 Labour to extract as much as possible from right wing debacle (5)
7 Odd, peacekeepers associating with old bastard (9)
8 Have more shags than money paid (6)
14 Dukes get depressed easily (5,4)
15 It's not the same having to switch the girl to head (9)
16 Fail miserably if sex partner has a spur on ... (3,2,3)
18... belonging to Jeffrey's heart throb eccentric (7)
19 She'd take very little time in stirring Bill's erection (6)
21 Take a joint off someone, not being with it? (5)
23 Rubbished Europe endlessly? That's not like IDS and co. (3-2)

Crossword 220 winner: GORDON STONER

ACROSS: 8 Treachery 9 Input 11 Scrotal 12 A bad lot 13 Every 14 Whodunnit 16 Rubbernecking 21 Unheard-of 23 Lingo 24 Culprit 26 Giblets 27 Egypt 28 Overdoses.

DOWN: 1 Stashed 2 George Bush 3 Scatty 4 Deflower 5 Dynamo 6 Did a bunk 7 Statute 10 Pal 15 No-nonsense 17 Blairite 18 Effigies 19 Butcher 20 Possess 22 Dot-com 23 Libido 25 Lay.

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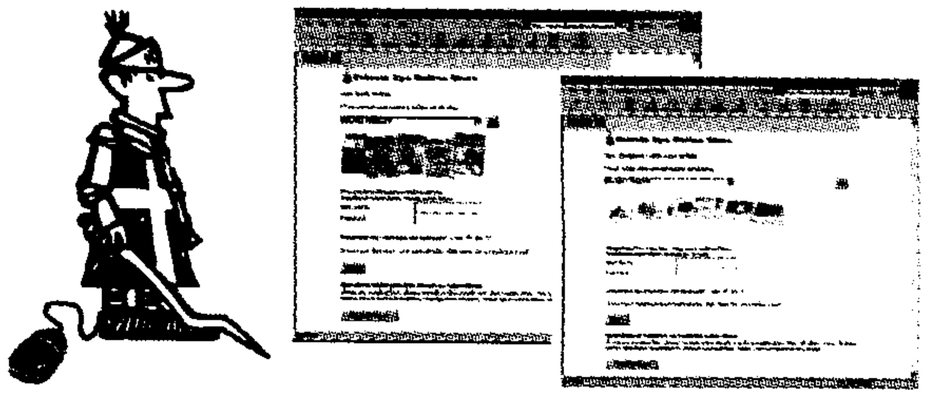

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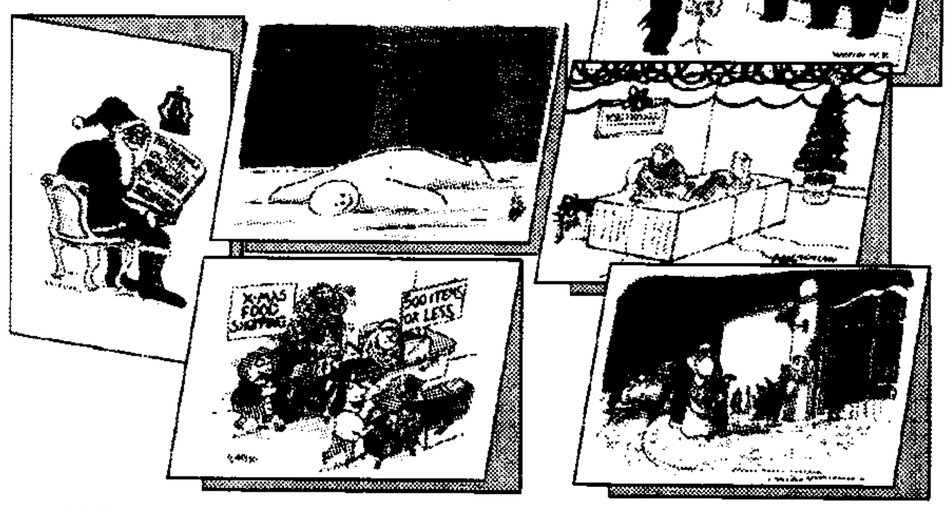

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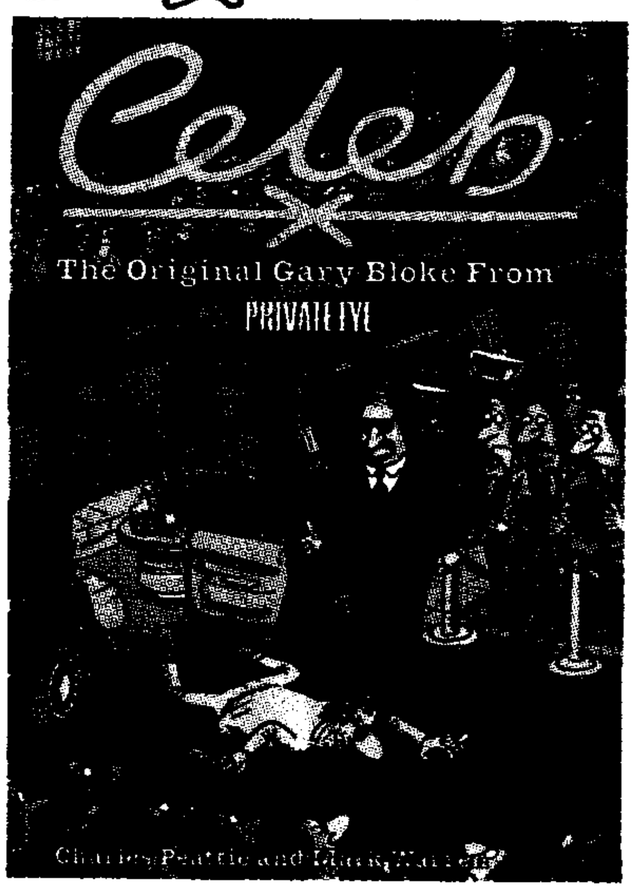

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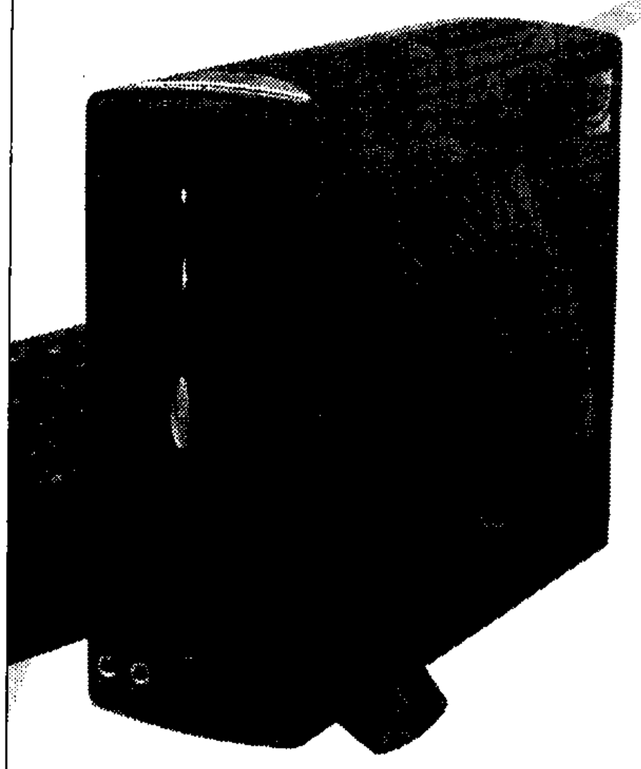

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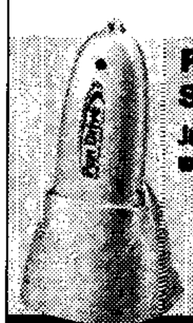

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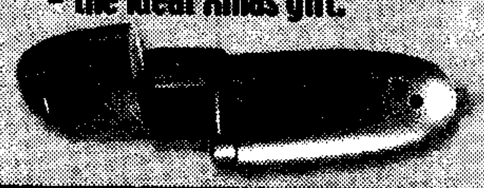

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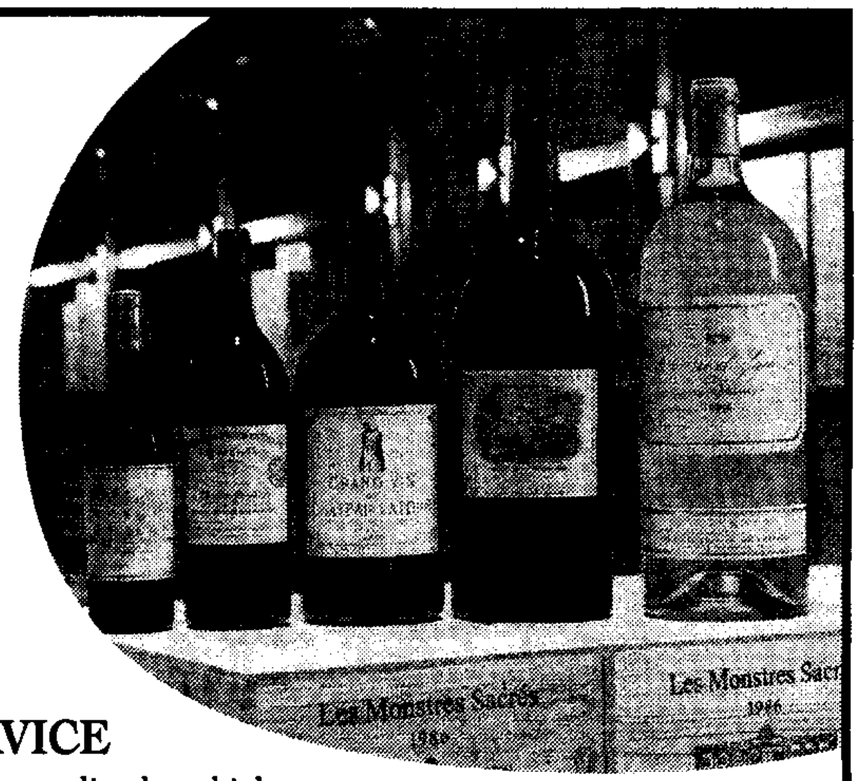

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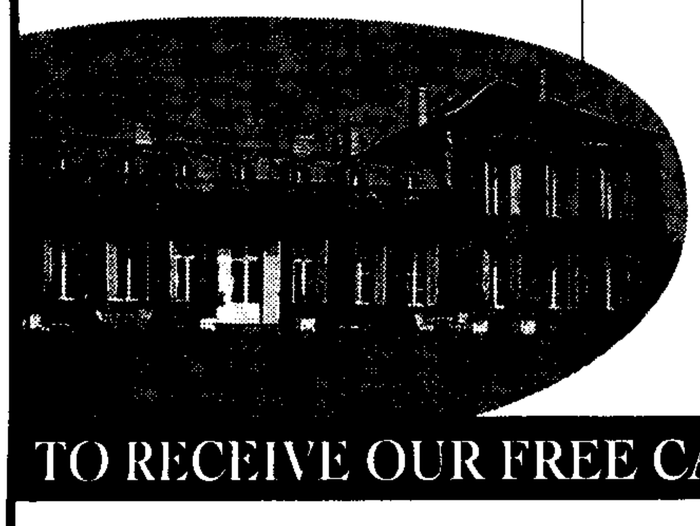

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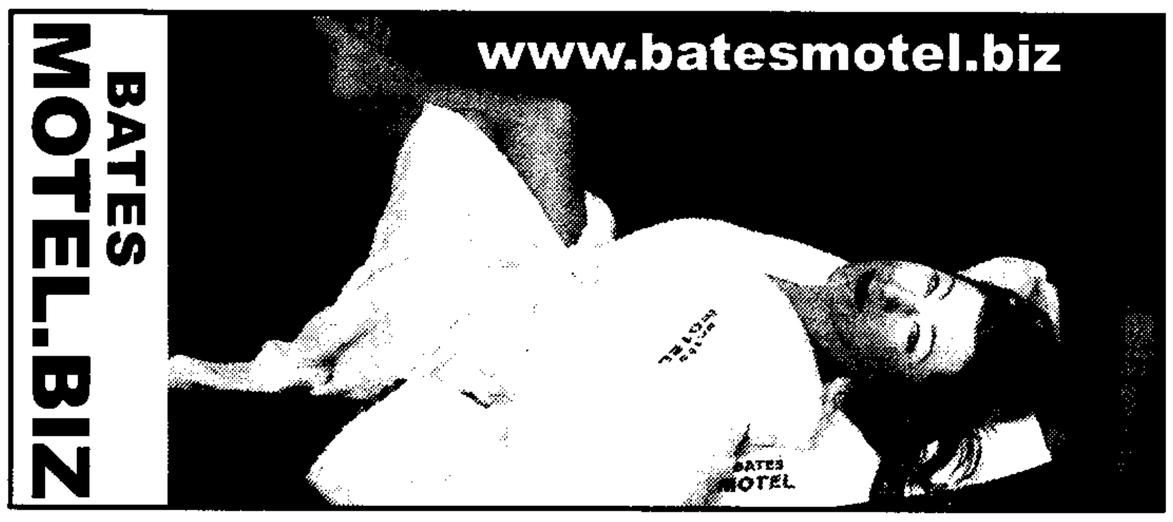

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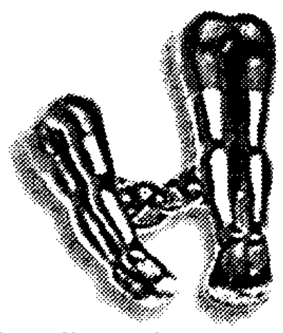

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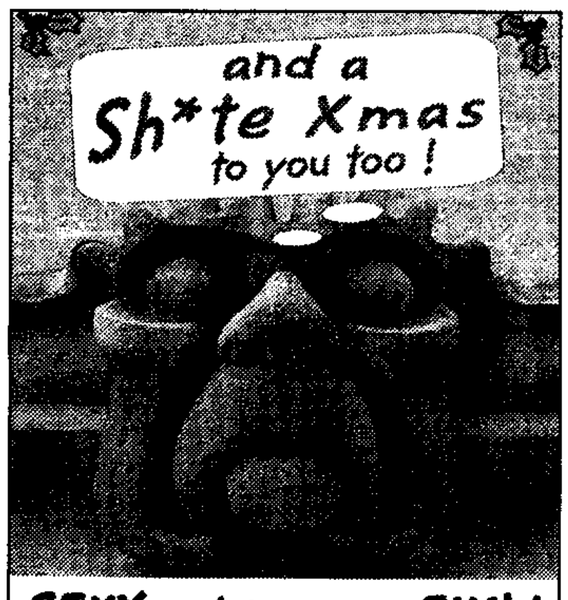

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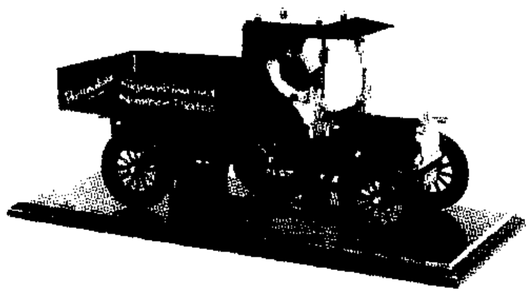

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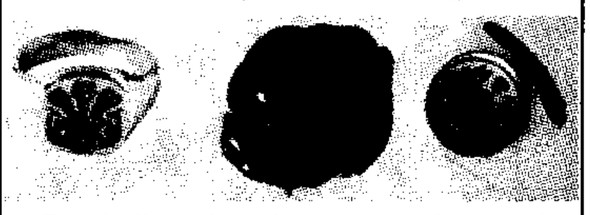

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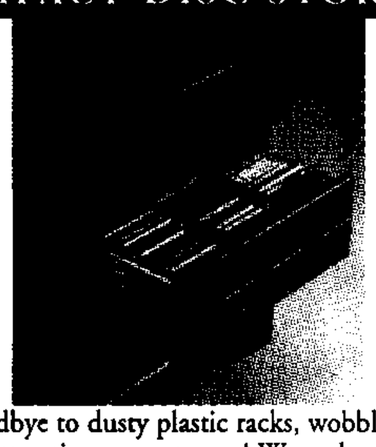

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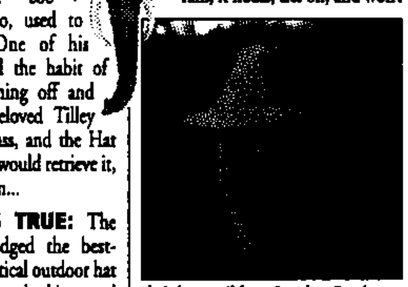

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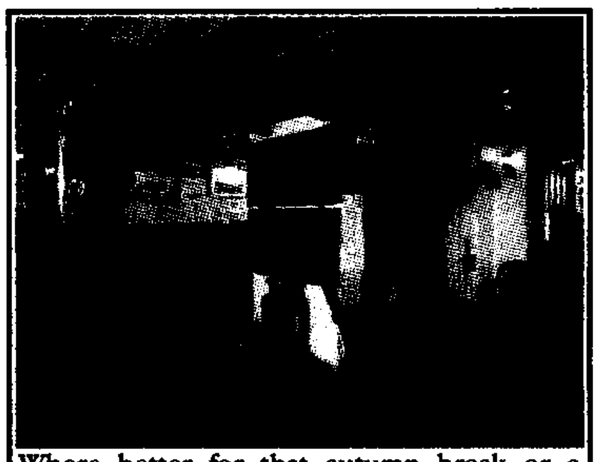

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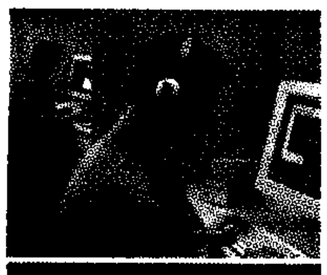

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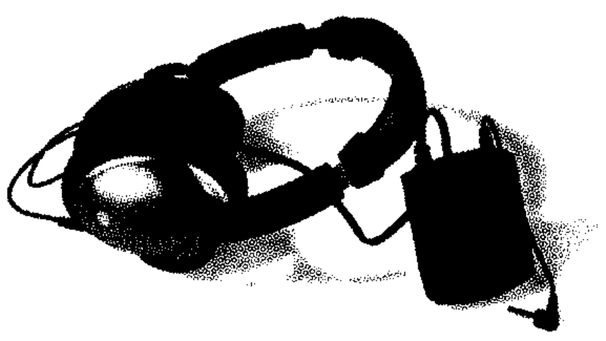

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